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Saluting our Brothers of the 1/503d *“The Best of the Best”*



Photo inscription of these 1/503d troopers: *“After the battle of Hill 65 (8-Nov-65). This photo was taken by Sam Scrimager inside the battalion perimeter on the afternoon of the 8th of Nov.”* [Provided by Dutch Holland, B/1/503d]
See story of Hill 65, Pages 8 - 26



Chaplain's Corner

Honored and Heroic Sky
Soldiers of the 2/503d Bn.,
Sky Soldiers everywhere,
and Families and Friends:

Grace and Peace to you
and to all whom you hold
in your hearts of Prayer
from God our Father, Redeemer and Winsome Holy
Spirit.



The Leapin' Deacon

Isaiah 40: 28-31:

*Do you not know, have you not heard?
The Lord God the everlasting God,
creator of the wide world,
grows neither weary nor faint;
no man can fathom his understanding.*

*He gives vigour to the weary,
new strength to the exhausted.*

*Young men may grow weary and faint,
even in their prime they may stumble and fall;
but those who look to the Lord will win new strength,
they will grow wings like eagles;
they will run and not be weary,
they will march on and never grow faint.*

Ephesians 6:10-11:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of
His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you will
be able to stand....*

Have you ever observed the mighty eagle in a vicious storm in a mountainous area? Suddenly, high amid the mountain crags and threats, the heavy storm strikes. It seems that the mighty and proud eagle will be dashed against the boulders and huge trees. But the extraordinary bird wheels into the storm, tilts its wings and lets the fury of the gale lift him upward until he soars high above the swift winds that might have destroyed him. Our living faith in our Blessed Lord is the tilt of our wings.

Our Lord God has given us faith-wings and a vibrant living hope. He has endowed us with an inner life and discipline, a soul. We are made to soar in heart and mind. We are made for storms and storm centers. As we deeply remember and honor our faithful Sky Soldiers, Patriots - our Comrades who have fallen in combat of wounds and the Wounded Warriors and Veterans, who succumb to age - no matter how - as we bless them and remember them - we are walking on 'Holy Ground' - yes, we are to soar into a life with our Living God and all the company of heaven. We will not be spared the storms.

In fact, the higher we go, sometimes the winds are stronger. No storm or difficulty need crush us. Tragedy, hurt, pain and death faced in bold and victorious faith may actually strengthen and deepen the splendid qualities and experiences of life now and forever. This is carried out in noble form with wings of our souls and the trusting tilt of steadfastness and faith.

It is our Living Lord who makes this a reality. He never leaves us alone without His presence. He is nearer than the air we breathe as we FOLLOW HIM. We have the awesome power to reject Him. He, by His saving work, forgives our sins, fills our hearts with His kind of Peace and Trust to a living hope. He gives us zest for His kind of life and love in the midst of storms and storm centers.

Yes, He lets us mount up with wings like eagles!



Blessings in abundance,

**Chaplain Conrad (Connie) Walker
"The Leapin' Deacon"
National Chaplain Emeritus
173d Airborne Association and
Military Order of the Purple Heart**



LTC CHARLES B. CARMICHAEL ~ A PARATROOPER

Last month's "Whodat?", the young EM pictured on the right, is our very own LTC Robert B. Carmichael, the former Battalion XO and CO of the 2/503d in '65/'66. During his second tour in Vietnam, Bob would serve as battalion commander with the 25th Infantry Division during Operation Crook.

The second photo on the right is of Sky Soldier Major Carmichael ready to board a chopper for LZ Wine during Operation Marauder on 2 January 1966 in the Mekong Delta.

In this very space I had written some tongue-in-cheek remarks about the good Colonel for whom I carried a radio, but last night, July 31st, his bride Exie called us with the sad news their son, LTC Charlie Carmichael had died from ongoing medical complications. Charlie was 58. He left behind wife Katy, son Robbie, brother Dave, sister Carol and his parents Bob and Exie and an extended family, he left us too soon.

Like his father, Charlie was a career soldier and a paratrooper, and following the Vietnam War, which he did not serve in but wished he had, his military postings took him around the world. In fact, he served with many Sky Soldiers who had also served with his dad.



**LTC Charles B. Carmichael
Paratrooper Extraordinaire
*Soaring with eagles***

Charlie was dealt some unfavorable cards following his military service, including debilitating back problems from his days as a paratrooper, and which required multiple surgeries. In spite of living in constant pain, he did not let that interfere with his work in helping other veterans whenever help was needed, including this vet.

Charlie was much the military historian, and his love, after his family, was fishing and University of Texas football. Unfortunate was the person to ever speak poorly about UT in his presense.

Charlie was a hard charger, a good soldier, a good man, and a caring friend. I already miss him.

**Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d**



Dear Sky Soldiers & Friends of Charlie:

Exie and I and our family can't thank you enough for the many calls, cards, letters, emails and postings expressing your condolences to Charlie's family. And a special thanks to Cowboy chopper pilot Tony Geishauser who attended the services as a representative of the 173d Airborne Brigade....Charlie was surely honored as were we.

It's been a couple weeks since the passing of our son, and while the hurt will remain for some time, the expressions of concern, care and love by so many who knew or didn't even know Charlie, has given our entire family the strength to carry on.

With our deepest respect, we thank you all.

Bob & Exie Carmichael



THE ORIGINAL GERONIMO BATTALION



Original Geronimo Battalion. In early 1966, the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, KY, was ordered to Vietnam. The famous World War II nickname of the 1/501st was "Geronimo" and we were "The Geronimo Battalion." We even had a wooden cigar-store vintage Indian mascot at Battalion HQ. Under command of LTC "Iron Mike" Healy, we received orders to deploy to Vietnam as the 4th Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, to join the 173d Airborne Brigade in country. Though we changed crests and shoulder patches when we joined the 173d, we still called ourselves, "The Geronimo Battalion."

June 6, 1966. On June 6, 1966, (WW II D-Day) 820 troopers of the newly-constituted 4th Battalion departed Fort Campbell enroute to Vietnam. The advance party flew directly to Vietnam. The main body flew and went by train to Oakland, CA, where they embarked on the SS John Pope, a WW II troop ship. After 18 long days at sea, the Pope landed at Vung Tau and the troops went to the sprawling Bien Hoa Air Base complex north of Saigon. Three future Medal of Honor recipients were on that ship: **Don Michael, Glenn English and Lazlo Rabel.** Don Michael's MOH was for actions in April 1967 and the others in later tours.

Combat Missions. During its 12 months in Vietnam, the original 4th Battalion participated in numerous missions including air assaults, blocking, search and destroy and reinforcement throughout I, II and III Corps. Our AO ranged from Bien Hoa to the DMZ. On one of its first missions, a 4/503d MEDEVAC was captured on camera and became the best-known photo of the Vietnam conflict - *The Agony of War*.

(See Issue 13, Page 5 for story behind *The Agony of War*)

The ultimate sacrifice. In the 12 months the original troopers were in country, 51 of our brothers died. Another 17 were KIA on later tours. At each reunion, the names of those fallen are read by their surviving buddies. The wounds of war have caused the premature deaths of many of our fellow soldiers. And, PTSD and Agent Orange have changed the lives of scores of once-healthy young men. Over 110 members of our proud battalion have died since return from Vietnam.

Geronimo Battalion today. Anyone who served with the 4/503d between June 6, 1966 and May 30, 1967 is a member of the original battalion. One third of the original battalion were teenagers, 18 and 19-year-olds, who quickly became men under fire. Today, most of us are grandparents, yet our memories of being in one of the finest fighting units ever assembled remain vivid. We are in touch with 395 brothers who served with the 4/503d in that year.

Some notable quotes by Geronimo troopers:

ABOUT OUR 4/503d STORIES

"These stories of over 40 years ago are recollections of events in which a matter of a few meters can have a dramatic impact on perception." (Hugh Kelley, B Co)

"You have never lived until you have almost died.... Life has a special meaning that the protected will never know." (Lynn "Doc" Morse, Medic, C Co, 2d year)

"Some have died, some have lived, some can't tell the difference." (Mike Adams, B Co & HHC)

A BETTER WORLD

"Maybe more people should share a foxhole; it might be a better world." (Thom Cook, Sr. Medic, C Co)

WAS I EVER THERE?

"So many years ago, so many stories. To be honest, at times it feels like I never was there, and other times I feel that I have never come home. Not sure if that makes any sense." (Joe Armstrong, B Co)

GERONIMO (excerpt)

"We have peered through the gates of hell to seek our enemy. We've wrestled demons and beckoned God to grant tranquility. The game is on, the stakes are high, the enemy can't be seen. Tension builds, we are for sure, on the brink of eternity."

(Mike Adams, B Co & HHC)



SUSAN OLIVER VISITS THE HERD IN VIETNAM

I finally got around to copying the photos of Susan Oliver I mentioned about a year ago. My brother sent me something on Martha Raye and I was telling him about Susan, so I through I would dig out the pictures.

These were taken at LZ Beaver, also referred to as a firebase. It was southwest of LZ English, almost due west of Bong Song. As I remember, the dirt road running west out of town ended at Beaver and the Song River turned north up the valley.

The first picture it is just me, Susan, and the VIP's on the chopper. I just happened to answer the radio and firebase logic was I had to walk down to the pad and pop the smoke.



The second photo is an unknown group from the line company on stand-down/security for the fire base. You might notice I had on a shirt since I was meeting the VIP's, of course everyone else came out later to see Susan.



The third picture is me talking to Captain Kruse from HHC/2/503, my commanding officer. Again, lots of guys in the background.



The date on the photos was April 1970, but they could have been taken earlier and just developed in April.

Dave Colbert
HHC/E/2/503d

Susan at the ready



Above is Susan as Vina in *The Cage* (Star Trek)

Susan Oliver was born Charlotte Gercke on February 13, 1932 in New York City, New York. Her acting career spanned 33 years and included roles in countless television shows, including *Star Trek*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Magnum P.I.*, *Peyton Place*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Playhouse 90*, *Wagon Train*, *Route 66*, *The Naked City*, and *The Fugitive*, among others. Roles in feature films included *The Gene Krupa Story*, *Butterfield 8* and *The Disorderly Orderly* with Jerry Lewis.



Oliver co-piloted her Piper Comanche to victory in 1970 in the 2760-mile transcontinental race known as the "Powder Puff Derby", which resulted in her being named *Pilot of the Year*. In 1967, she became the fourth woman to fly a single-engine aircraft solo across the Atlantic Ocean and the second to do it from New York City.

Oliver died from lung cancer in Woodland Hills, California, on May 10, 1990. Her age at death was 58, but in the city of her birth, the *New York Times* obituary stated that she was 61 years old.



Fighting to keep the sand out of my beer

By Richard Cutler

DARKNESS is falling.

High above the thick Vietnamese jungle a lone helicopter is punching its way home. Three thousand feet below, a Digger finishes his last cigarette before night and listens to the sound filtering through the trees. Enviously he thinks of the crew of the unseen chopper. He sees them sitting back comfortably, cracking jokes over the intercom as they speed at 75 knots-plus towards home.

He can see them happy at the thought of a night on the town – in the messes and bars of the nearby cities of Vung Tau, Bien Hoa or Saigon. He wonders what the night could bring for his infantry company, spread on the ground in an overnight position. Already the gloom under the canopy is thickening. The figures of others merge with the background of thick bushes and vines, as visibility decreases.



(Harvey Lacey photo)

The critical period is approaching. A low whistle sounds and the company is called to stand-to.

The slight rustle of 100 men moving to their perimeter posts seems to scream in the stillness. Each man lies in his shallow shell-scraps and prepares to face the night. In the distance a flock of birds takes to the air, protesting. Have they been startled by men in black moving below them? Has there been a silent pajama-clad spectator to our stopover? Will the VC presence be announced in a few minutes with a murderous burst of automatic fire and a hail of rockets?

Or will it be another night when the only sounds are birds and animals and from sleepy sentries stumbling to their posts? Nights are long in the Vietnamese jungle. The combination of tension and hard earth can make sleep difficult.

THREE weeks or more patrolling through the undergrowth, carrying a 60lb pack, takes its toll. No wonder the Task Force base at Nui Dat is regarded as a haven by the infantry soldier. Here he can relax several degrees behind rows of barbed wire and deep fighting pits. It is far from the “other world” – the dank, still jungle. At Nui Dat there is plentiful water for washing and shaving, a can of beer at the company canteen, and a game of darts or even a movie. Not much by Australian standards, but a far cry from the bush life where entertainment is restricted to picking off leeches or killing scorpions.

Life at Nui Dat comes second on the scale of living standards for Australian troops in Vietnam. The base, about two miles long and a half mile wide, is home to most of Australia’s 7000-man contingent. The area draws its name from the small, scarred hill in its centre. It was established in 1966.

It is the base for all Australian unit operations. The skies above are crowded with helicopters, transport planes and artillery shells flung from nearby support batteries. Patrols daily snake across the broad swath of cleared ground surround the base, to be swallowed up in rubber plantations and patches of jungle at its border. Hours later they will be disgorged, sweating and dirty, thankful for the sight of the rows of sandbagged tents which are home.



“The 4RAR lines in Nui Dat, with excellent access to the facilities, 1968. “

[Photo by Tony Jones]

(continued....)





Infantrymen from 6RAR by their showers, 1969.

[Image by Peter Fischer]

PATROLLING of the TAOR (tactical area of responsibility) is a routine task carried out with the minimum of fuss. There is no guarantee, though, of the area remaining free of guerillas. This is one of the worst features of Vietnam service.

At time it is hard to believe there is a war going on; at other times it is hard to believe there is anything else. Operations in Phuoc Tuy Province are mostly clear-cut. Troops move into jungle areas where civilians are forbidden to live and where an innocent Vietnamese has no reason to go.

In the other phases of the Australian activities, the issues are involved. The areas to the south of Nui Dat are densely populated. It is here the VC are entrenched. The major towns like Baria, Long Dien, Dat Do and Hoa Long have guerilla units drawn from their townspeople. These units are content largely to restrict their fighting to the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Viet Nam) whose small, fortress-like camps can be death-traps. The Australian bid to reduce the strength of these guerilla units centres mainly on snap village searches, ambushes and harassing artillery fire often directed by spotter planes.

Village searches are frustrating and usually fruitless. It is hard to believe that a unit of, say, 150 is drawn from a quiet little town. Diggers move from a cordon position in line abreast, prodding, overturning and digging.

The villagers watch them blankly while their children rush among the soldiers, cadging cigarettes and food. Buffaloes, kept in flimsy pens, show the only overt hostility. They will break free of their restraint and charge thunderingly, even without provocation.

The village search is the Nui Dat soldier's main source of contact with the Vietnamese. Apart from this he will spend only four days' leave in Vietnam, at the rest centre in Vung Tau.

For the 1000 or so Australians stationed at the logistic support base at Vung Tau, service in Vietnam is comparatively a Cook's tour. Their sprawling compound on the beachfront of the peninsula city is only two miles from the hundreds of bars and messes catering for servicemen. Vung Tau is neutral ground, apparently because of the VC share of the bar profits, and there is little risk of fighting.

A narrow road built up from swamps is the only access. ARVN outposts guard the neck of the peninsula. U.S. launches patrol the South China Sea coast. For the Australians in Vung Tau and the small group at U.S. headquarters in Saigon it is a good life. For the less fortunate Diggers at Nui Dat, about one-third of whom are combat troops, there is dull routine punctured by bursts of violence.

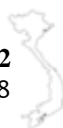
The "bush Digger" feels strongly about the difference in state of his counterpart. A favourite joke in Nui Dat sums up the feeling:

"What did you do in the war, Daddy?"

"I was in Vung Tau, fighting to keep the sand out of my beer."

Published in the Newcastle Herald, December, 1968.
Winner of the AJA Prodi Award for
Feature Writing, 1969. (photos added)

[Sent in by Ken Baker, 1RAR]



Battle On Hill 65

(Operation HUMP 5 to 9 November 1965)

By: **Lowell D. Bittrich, CO B/1/503d**

This paper was prepared in May 1966 following my turning over of command of Company B, 1st Battalion 503d Infantry and preparing to return to the United States and Fort Benning, Georgia. While studying the history of our Nations' Civil War I was often struck by how quickly memories of key participants in battles fade or become distorted over time. Rather than meeting the same fate I've prepared this paper knowing that it may still suffer errors caused by recounting experience solely from my prospective. At Fort Benning I was invited to prepare a monograph on the battle. I declined. This paper would have more than met that request. However, I had three serious reservations in providing it to anyone. First, at several points I am critical of someone or some unit. I see no good purpose in making that a matter of record. Secondly, I found myself saying "I" all too often. Put differently, many owed credit for their bravery are not recognized because I fail to recall their names or the particulars. And third, with all the anxiety amongst Americans on the merits of this War (a situation I attribute solely to our lack of political leadership) I don't wish to provide anyone, any basis to question the valor of our soldiers or their leadership. The 173d Airborne Brigade enjoyed the finest leaders our Army had to offer, our paratroopers were the best our government has ever put on any battlefield.

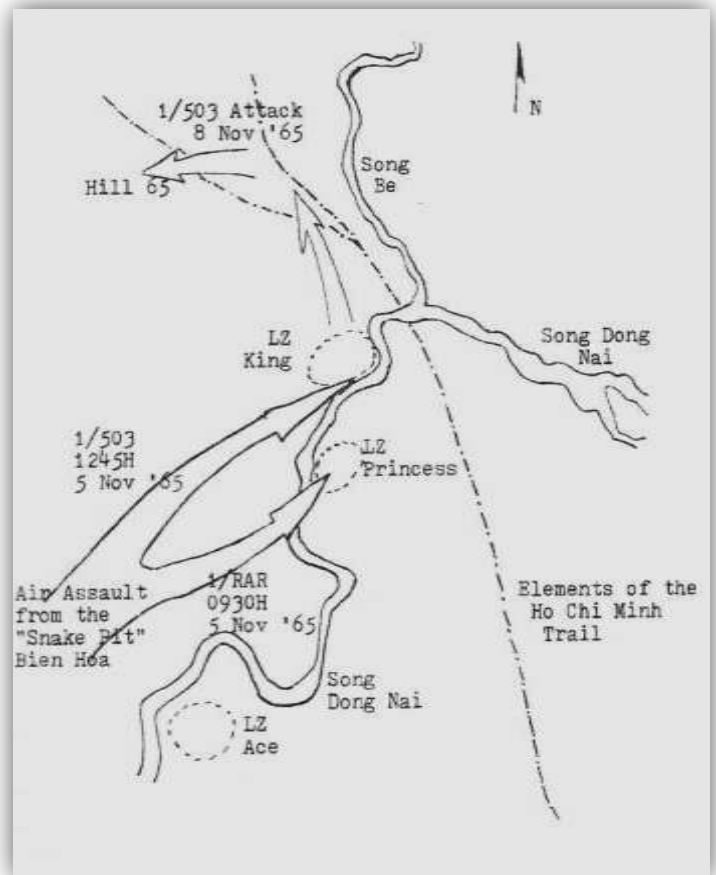


**David Thomas Ugland, A/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 66**

OPERATION HUMP

~ November 1965 ~

Early on Friday, November 5, 1965 the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) entered War Zone "D" in the Republic of Vietnam to conduct Operation HUMP (OPORD 28-65). Somewhat auspiciously the name of the operation signified the halfway point of our year in Vietnam. The search operation began with the 1/RAR (Royal Australian Regiment) deployed south of the Dong Nai River and paratroopers of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry being lifted by helicopters from the "snake pit" around noon to conduct a helicopter assault on a LZ northwest of the Dong Nai and Song Be Rivers. Leaving my rear detachment under the control of my Executive Officer, First Lieutenant Charles E. Johnson, Jr., B Company deployed with five officers, 195 enlisted men and one ARVN interpreter.



The scene of the battle for hill 65 is best captured by SP4 Joseph M. Kenny, the B Company, 1st Battalion 503d Infantry artillery team radio operator (RTO) from Battery C, 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, 173d Airborne Brigade in his poem "D Zone":

(continued....)



“D ZONE”

By Joseph M. Kenny

**Beneath the canopy of green,
Flitting shadows make their way,
In silent files they furtively steal,
Looking, searching for their prey.**

**Muffled footfalls barely heard above
other muted sounds,
Of an armed band moving, through the
heart of "Cong's" home grounds.**

**Back again in the D Zone and it's been
said and heard,
"Charlie" shares exclusive rights with
the One-Seventy-Third.**

**Of course it's hotly contested,
And real estate's on a rising cost,
With payment made on either side,
In blood and sweat long lost.**

**But now it's push on and on,
Through swamp and tough terrain,
With salty sweat searing your eyes,
And a roaring in your brain.**

**A burning feeling in your chest,
And each breath a gasp of air,
But it's move and push and drive,
Until you've found "Charlie's" lair.**

**Maybe soon they'll call a halt,
And you'll slip to the mucky ground,
Grateful to pick the leeches off,
And pass the smokes around.**

**But now it's bamboo thicket,
And lurking, snagging vine,
While up ahead the point man,
Searching for some sign**

**Of elusive, wily "Charlie,"
The guy we're looking for,
And back in line some joker quips,
"Hell of a way to fight a war."**

**A rifle shot cracks out.
Like the rap of a conductor's baton
That start's an overture,
And willing or not it's on.
Fire is answered with fire,
A crescendo quickly reached,
And "Charlie" breaks and runs,
As his line of defense is breached.**

**The ensuing silence is unearthly,
Still there's ringing in your ears,
And guys are tending the wounded,
Soothing their unspoken fears.**

**Here and there's a still, still shape,
Who'll never walk D Zone again.
Their names to be struck from the rolls,
With one stroke of a shaking pen.**

**The call comes down to saddle up,
We'll soon be on our way,
For we've a goodly stretch to cover,
Before the end of day.**

**The guys no longer look tired,
They've a determined look of eye,
As they scan the shrouded flanks
And treetops that hide the sky.**

**Now as I write I feel pride,
Proud that I have served
With the "Sky Soldiers" of Company B,
First of the Five-0-Third.**

Having been the battalion S2 prior to taking command of B Company, I had studied the area and was well aware of reports of an enemy build-up in the area. While there were signs of activity in and around the LZ on which we landed, the first three days of the operation turned out to be relatively uneventful with the exception of an enemy contact in the Australian sector.

Late in the day on Sunday, November 7, 1965 the battalion had established a base camp. With some time left before dark Lieutenant Colonel John Tyler (Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion 503d Infantry) ordered each of us to search forward of our company positions. Again we found nothing. However, our C Company Commander, Captain Henry B. Tucker (just "Tuck" or "Big Tuck" to most of us) reported hearing chickens cackling to his north. I chuckled, having never seen a chicken in the jungles, and didn't pay much attention to the report.

On day four of the search (Monday, November 8, 1965) Colonel Tyler, ordered his rifle companies to continue the search of the area some 35 miles northeast of Saigon and about 15 miles north of our Bien Hoa base camp. C Company was to conduct its search northwest of the battalion base in the direction of hill 65....

(continued....)



...B Company was to move approximately two kilometers north northeast, fan-out its three platoons and search an additional one-thousand meters in a northerly direction.

At approximately 0610 hours on the morning of November 8, 1965 B Company left the battalion base, which was located at approximate grid coordinates 111303. The company had recently been issued the PRC 25 radio and had insufficient radios to operate below the company level, thus all platoons were on the company frequency. The third platoon was in the lead followed by my headquarters and a small element of the weapons platoon, the first platoon and then the second platoon.



**Gary Lewis Elmore, B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

Our plan was to move approximately two kilometers north northeast, establish a company base, and to fan-out the three rifle platoons an additional kilometer with the intent to look at hill 78 in the vicinity of -122323 and the road/trail in the vicinity of -115329 and -110328.

As the battalion had secured and spent the night of November 7 together I cautioned my third platoon leader, 2nd Lieutenant Clair H. Thurston, Jr., to move cautiously out of the battalion perimeter and to take his time searching forward. The movement to the planned company base was uneventful with no sign of activity in the area. The company closed on the new company base at approximately 0715 hours.

Having reported the establishment of our base at approximately -117319, I ordered Clair to begin moving in the direction of the trail in the vicinity of -110328. Approximately twenty minutes later the first platoon moved in the direction of the trail at -115329 and following their move; ten minutes later, the second platoon headed in the direction of a hill marked on my map as hill 78.

**Rudolph Rene Agular, C/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

Rudy and I went to Hollenbeck Jr. High, and Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles together. For more than seven years we were good friends. In high school Rudy joined ROTC and we kind of drifted apart. After high school I joined the Navy and Rudy joined the Army so I never saw Rudy again.

The day I heard of his death was a sad day for me. Your fellow Roughriders and I will never forget you Rudy. Rest in peace. From a friend,"

**Carlos X. Esqueda
(Virtual Wall)**

At approximately 0750 hours, alerted by sporadic small arms and automatic weapons fire coming from the southwest of our position, we listened intently to the battalion command net. Subsequently we learned that C Company had deployed its second platoon, led by First Lieutenant Ben Waller, north of the battalion base in direction of hill 65 and was in contact with an enemy force of about platoon size.

Moments later the report was updated with information that contact was lost with their lead platoon. Then we began to hear artillery fire. I alerted all three platoons of the situation and cautioned them to move slowly as planned. About five minutes later C Company deployed a second platoon and shortly thereafter reported it was in contact with an enemy force considerably larger than a platoon. The firing had noticeably increased and was no longer sporadic.

Shortly after 0815 hours I took three actions; first, ordering all platoons to halt their movements and to hold their current positions; second, to get prepared to move in the direction of the firing; and third, notified the battalion we had stopped our search pending any instructions to continue, return to the battalion base or to move in the general direction of hill 65. The battalion RTO acknowledged my call and ordered me to "wait-out."

(continued...)



On the company net I informed my platoon leaders that I anticipated we would be moving shortly and if so ordered we would reorganize on the march rather than returning to the company base. My instructions were to the effect that the third platoon would move on the most direct route toward hill 65 or the battalion base as the lead platoon, my headquarters element would intercept the first platoon as it moved to catch the third platoon and the second platoon would follow and secure the companies rear.



**Clifton William Harrington, III, C/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

No sooner had I issued those instructions when Colonel Tyler, on the battalion command net, asked how long it would take to reassemble my unit. I responded that we were prepared to move now and felt we could reorganize safely on the move rather than having my platoons close on my position. Colonel Tyler acknowledged my response and ordered me to "wait out".

Having learned that Captain Tucker had joined and committed his remaining platoon to the fight, I told my platoon leaders we would most likely be going directly to the assistance of C Company and if that were the case we must be prepared to move on a moment's notice. Colonel Tyler ordered me to move and assist C Company at approximately 0845 hours. He further

informed me that the situation was not clear on hill 65, and that while speed was of the essence, I was not to take any undo risks. I informed Colonel Tyler that we were up to it, we had a plan and we were ready to execute.

On order my third and first platoons moved quickly! I believe both platoons had in fact monitored my conversations with Colonel Tyler, anticipated the order to move and actually began to execute their movements prior to my call. My final instructions were to move to the sound of the firing in the general direction of hill 65. Unless we made enemy contact earlier, the third platoon was to hold up just short of the creek at approximately grid coordinate -108309, a creek bed just east of hill 65, at which time I intended for both the third and first platoons to go on line with the first platoon moving to the left of the third platoon and the second platoon following the third platoon onto hill 65.



Map showing where in War Zone "D" Hill 65 was located. If you go north of LZ King to where the Song Dong Nai and Song Be Rivers intercept, Hill 65 was west of their juncture in the loop formed by the Song Be. The jungle there was so dense it took three days to travel from LZ King to Hill 65.

(Map inscription from Dutch Holland, B/1/503)

(continued...)



My headquarters element quickly made contact with the first platoon and discovered that we were paralleling the line of march of the third platoon. I ordered the first platoon leader, First Lieutenant Michael P. DeFrancisco, to move his platoon even further to the left or south of the third platoon in order to have two platoons abreast and ready to rapidly move on line once we reached the objective. The second platoon quickly closed-up on us and secured the company rear. While on the move we vainly attempted to establish radio contact with Company C.

After numerous attempts to make radio contact, I became concerned we might have problems running into C Company's fires. I alerted my platoons that if they suspected they were receiving friendly fires they were to hold their position until I could work it out. At this point there was artillery fire north of hill 65. My artillery team was monitoring that situation to preclude our walking into fires.



**SGT Lloyd Green, 3/319th
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

Moving rapidly, at approximately 0925 hours, Lt. Thurston reported enemy movement forward of the third platoon on the far side of the creek just short of hill 65. Clair further reported that he believed the enemy was not aware of his presence; however, he suspected he was beginning to take fire from C Company. With one more attempt I raised C Company on the radio. I learned that C Company did not have radio contact with all of its forward elements but that they would make every attempt to cease its fires. We agreed that they only needed to halt the fires on the east side of hill 65 as we would be attacking from the east side of the creek to get to them. While I attempted to get further information as

to their situation they were having great difficulty even talking to me. I would learn why later.

We deployed the company as planned, began to move to the creek, totally surprising the enemy force to our front.

As we began to move we opened up, firing everything we had in our third and first platoons. We had no difficulty crossing the creek and began to climb the hill having stacked enemy bodies as we went.

We had caught the enemy from the rear. I believe that C Company had successfully pushed the enemy off the hill and generally to the north of the hill. Our contact appeared to have closed on the enemies' left flank and with the element of surprise we were virtually unopposed in getting on the hill.

Moving initially with the first platoon my headquarters element crossed the creek and began climbing hill 65. As we climbed the hill we spotted a series of well dug in and covered enemy positions. None of the positions were occupied and a number of the enemy lay dead close to the positions. In a rush to reach C Company, I moved my headquarters element quickly to the left and ahead of the first platoon.

Halfway up the hill one of my radio operators appeared to fall. With the sound of firing coming from many directions, my initial reaction was that he was hit. I grabbed his harness and continued my climb. Finally I heard him yelling to let go. He had slipped and not been hit.

The hill was shaped like an egg, running generally north and south. Across its northern crest it is approximately four hundred meters wide and from north to south some 600 meters deep. From the creek to the crest of the hill is about 300 meters. The hill was heavily vegetated with teakwood trees and what is generally referred to as triple canopy jungle. With the sun not penetrating the treetops, the jungle floor was generally clear. There were well traveled trails leading off the north and south sides of the hill.

**Clair Hall Thurston, Jr., B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

"It is with deep gratitude we are remembering you and all the others who served and died in times of war so that we may enjoy the Freedom and Liberties that make the United States of America great."

(Virtual Wall)

(continued....)





**Harold McRae Smith, C/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

"I miss you so, old friend. When in church I thank God for sharing you with me during the brief time we laughed together in our youth in 1960-1962. Remember when you danced with my Mom at Shaw AFB's Teen Club and made her feel like a teenager again? She loved it, and we all, especially you through your freckled good looks, unabashed charm, and dashing smile, had a good laugh at your loud aftershave -- you had accidentally poured too much of it on yourself!

Then there was the night of your big party. Your Dad took care of us 14-year-old guys, your Mom the girls. After midnight your Dad let us stay up to brag and talk about girls around the pond next to your rustic home about half a mile off the Columbia-Sumter highway across from Shaw AFB.

Late that night in the early a.m. you, Sam Soogoff, a couple of the other guys and I walked out to the highway to a small, local juke joint to see if anyone would buy us a bottle of wine. We were so determined and innocent. As we stood outside listening to the curious mixture of the blues and the rumble of Shaw's jets glowing in the night sky, one of the patrons about to enter the front door, who was much amused with us, suddenly said to me, 'You Wilburson!' I responded, 'What?!' With growing amusement and emphasis he again said, 'You

Wilburson!' What he had meant was that I was Wilburn's son; he had often caddied for my Dad who was a kind of working-class scratch golfer. Our new-found friend had remembered me breaking 90 while my Dad's sharp eye and impatient tongue exclaimed yet again, 'Can't you see..? Can't you do...?'

We all laughed and celebrated when he graciously agreed to take all the money we could scrounge, go inside and buy us a bottle of wine. What elation, Harold, what good fortune. We then returned to your pond with our great victory in hand. Each of us touched the prize, and there was just enough wine to have a symbolic impact in our boyish heads. Then as a growing mist hovered over the pond and our shoreline fire dimmed, the night sky began to lighten. Suddenly we all crashed only to be shortly awakened and refreshed by your Mom's terrific breakfast.

We grew up a bit that night, Harold, in the summer of 1960, the summer before our freshman year in high school. Then while I was studying history as a college sophomore in 1965, you were killed in action -- the pathos of it all only increases with experience. Just know that you live on with me, in me, and in songs my Viet-Nam veteran band mate and I have written. Here is one of your verses from our song, "The Wall":

**On Panel 3
For All to See
Is Harold Smith
I ask, "What if?"
American Wall
Viet-Nam Wall
The Wall**

Harold, you are a hero. So are all of the 58,000 Vets who keep eternal vigil with you. Your collective heroism beckons me each time I raise my eyes to South Carolina's 8th star and stripe on our flag, embellished by you in any breeze at any time on any government flagpole in any state in the USA, and yes, today, again snapping to in our embassy compound in Viet-Nam. God bless, Harold, God bless. Friends Forever,"

**Kenneth Wilburn
Department of History
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC
(Virtual Wall)**

Upon reaching the top of the hill I spotted Tucker. Bullets were flying. He was in a well dug enemy position with a RTO and his second platoon leader. As I approached them they all yelled for me to get down....

(continued....)





**Bryant Brayboy, Jr., B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

Brayboy spent almost half his life in the Army, but only eight days in Viet Nam before he was killed. The 33-year-old sergeant first class had written to his wife, "I believe in what I am fighting for," before his death on November 8, 1965, north of Saigon in combat with Company B of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. The 16-year veteran had fought in the Korean War and planned to retire in four years and start a business. He was survived by his wife, daughter, mother, five brothers and two sisters.

"My name is SP/4 Jose A. Ortiz. I had the honor to serve with Sergeant Brayboy. We were stationed with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in 1963-65. He was my Platoon Sergeant.

He was a fine man, a proud man, and a fair man. He would help anyone if they requested it. I was First Gunner, Weapons Squad, and he taught me well on the use of the M60. I was transferred to the 1st Brigade of the 502nd in the spring of 1965. We wound up in Viet Nam that summer.

I lost contact with him at that time. I didn't find out till May 3, 2006 that he had passed on. At the age of 61, I found myself shedding tears for a comrade-in-arms who had left us so many, many years before. The world lost a good man on that autumn day back in 1965.

A I R B O R N E ! Sergeant Brayboy."

Jose A. Ortiz
(Virtual Wall)

.... My immediate concern was for what I saw just forward of their position. Less than one hundred feet in front of them was a M60 machine gun being dragged backwards. The weapon was pointed to the north and I was anxious to get it moving back that direction. Once we got the machine gun forward on the crest of the hill I returned to Tucker's position.

On a closer look I found Lt. Waller had been hit in one shoulder and his opposite hand. A radio operator was holding the company radio and keying the hand mike for him. Trying to determine the situation, the best I could get from them was that they had approximately twenty-one effective soldiers left on the hill. They weren't sure about the rest of the company. My stomach hurt, there had to be more.

My early assessment was that we had a mess on our hands and must initially try to secure a position on the hill. Until I had a better feel for the C Company situation I would be defending. The firing was intense from the north; and I had no idea what was between us and the firing. If we could find the remainder of C Company we could consolidate the position and hold under almost any condition.

I ordered the third platoon to attempt to make contact with any C Company personnel by extending their position to the north of the hill while continuing to maintain their tie with the first platoon on their right. The second platoon, led by First Lieutenant Robert A. Frakes, would extend to the right of the first platoon further winding around the hill.

Shortly following that order the first platoon reported the enemy had moved behind them and they were taking fire from the east. I received a similar report from my third platoon. Occupying an abandoned enemy position, I began to wonder if the enemy had deliberately let us in and was in the process of closing off all escape routes.

Lt. Thurston reported he was taking fifty caliber fire from two directions. Listening, I could make out the distinct sound of three fifty caliber machine guns. They were pounding from three very different directions. I reported to the battalion that I had a very confusing situation on my hands, that while I was on the hill and had contact with a small element of C Company, it was difficult to determine exactly where all elements of the company were located. I then estimated that we could be up against as many as three Viet Cong battalions. It was my belief that at this time in the war one would only find enemy fifty caliber machine guns at the regimental level....

(continued....)



...The fact that we were getting fire from those guns from three distinct and well dispersed directions caused me to believe we were in contact with a much larger enemy force than previously reported. A second alternative was that we were fighting a main line PAVN unit. I am not sure which alternative I reported to Colonel Tyler. Finally, I reported that I believe C Company had taken severe casualties, maybe as high as a third of the company. There was a long pause before the conversation was acknowledged and terminated.



**Steve Orriss, 3/319th
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

My next, and last, conversation with Lt. Thurston had the makings of a disaster. He reported that he had spotted an enemy machine gun and was going to take it. Little did I know he had decided to do it on his own. I knew I should have stopped him, we weren't ready to move to the attack. He moved well forward of his platoon and was killed. When I received that report my heart sank, and even worse I learned, he was so far forward that we could not get to him. In a brief conversation with Platoon Sergeant Walter G. Power I learned the facts and assured myself that he had the situation back under control. Once I accepted the reality and reported to Colonel Tyler, my headquarters and I became very angry. Up to this point in the fight we were not able to put a name to any of the dead.

Now this wasn't just a fight to help C Company, we lost one of our best and they were going to pay. It was time to take calculated risks. Without really understanding the entire situation on the ground I began to call for as much artillery as I could get. My excellent artillery team, from the 319 Artillery Battalion, brought a curtain of steel forward of us. They initially placed their fires

well forward of the north and northeast base of the hill and began to walk them in. The fires were devastating but the enemy would soon tactically adjust to lower their effect.

The artillery fire temporarily turned the tide by buying us much needed time to locate all elements of C Company with the exception of seventeen paratroopers. We would not locate those remaining seventeen until the following day. We now had formed a crescent around the hill that extended from the southeast to the northwest. The south side of the hill was not covered and so I ordered my second platoon to extend as far to the south as possible without jeopardizing their current position.

At that time I made an estimate of C Company's casualties. While they were severe, we had found many more than twenty-one effective paratroopers at the top of the hill with which to make a fight. While the firing continued, we quickly began the task of consolidating the position and recovering the dead and wounded. Our medics were pushed to their limits but accomplished the seemingly impossible. I ordered everyone to "dig in," we were going to hold this position. The worst was yet to come.

**Kelly Eugene Whitaker, B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

"Kelly left us after a short time in HHC, 3rd Bn 187th Infantry (Airborne), 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Kentucky. His death in November 1965 shocked us all. So young and full of life!!"

From a friend

"For my big brother from your little sister. Even after almost 41 years, there is not a day that goes by when I do not think of you. I hope you would be as proud of me today as I have always been of you. Someday before my time here is through I want to visit the Wall and touch your name, just as you have always touched my soul. I love you, Kelly! From his sister,"

**Francine Craig
(Virtual Wall)**

The adjustment the enemy made, as a result of our effective artillery, was to move closer to us in order to avoid the devastating fires. Their reaction clearly demonstrated that we were up against a highly trained and disciplined force. I reported to Colonel Tyler that I believed we were surrounded and, while we would hold the position, we were going to need help. Colonel Tyler provided encouragement and said he was working on it.

(continued...)



Then, out of seemingly nowhere, came the sounds of three bugles.

My operations sergeant, Staff Sergeant Ernest J. Sundborg, turned to me and asked if I had heard them. I said I didn't, but I had. My mind just didn't want to accept it. After what seemed a lifetime, I realized we had to move fast to overcome a major assault. I called for more artillery and again reported that we needed help if we were to hold. My platoons reacted quickly, almost without direction, repositioning machine guns and troopers to meet the blunt of the attack.

Leaders seemed to appear everywhere knowing what was about to happen. I tried to be everywhere. We were ready for the worst. The enemy came at us shoulder-to-shoulder. It was unreal, like something out of films from the civil war. They made it about halfway up the hill when we finally broke them and they backed down off the hill slowly. They made a second attempt, seemingly more desperate than the first, but it met with the same fate. This time they were in retreat, but it wasn't over yet.



**Theodore Shamblin, B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

Prior to the first assault, in an effort to collect, treat, and protect the wounded, I had begun to establish a position for them on the south side of hill 65. I thought this to be the safest place on the battlefield. I was wrong and would learn it shortly. To protect them I ordered the second platoon to assign two squads (eighteen paratroopers) to secure the area. The position was no sooner established then it was hit by yet another terrible assault.



**Herman Brown, B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

The remainder of the second platoon attempted to come to their rescue. However, the position was cut off from the rest of the company and they were fighting hand-to-hand. Over a short fifteen minute period, three desperate reports came from three different non-commissioned officers over the company net. Each of them died shortly following their request for help. Finally, Specialist 4th Class Jerry W. Langston took over the radio, making one more effort to report. We only had his name when all radio contact was lost.

When the second platoon was unable to get to them, I ordered the first platoon to move to that area. Some hours later, after reporting they had busted their way through a wall of the enemy, the first platoon reported they had retaken the position, found fifteen dead, two severely wounded paratroopers and Langston, unconscious with a large hole in his helmet, but still alive. While we exacted a heavy toll on the enemy, we paid a terrible price for not adequately covering our rear.

(continued....)



During a lull in the fighting I began to move among the wounded, meeting for the first time our Protestant Chaplain James "Jim" M. Hutchens. He was new to the battalion and had moved with C Company on this operation. He had been hit in one leg attempting to get to some of our wounded. He was in pain but he smiled. Somehow that smile made me feel better (that smile was a gift he shared with our battalion throughout the rest of our tour).

I watched as Specialist 5th Class Lawrence Joel, a medic from C Company, hit several times in one leg, treated several of our wounded. Some of those wounded he had dragged out of the firing. He was in great pain but kept on helping. My eyes began to blur, we had paid a dear price. Reaching for the radio, I readied for my toughest report. When Colonel Tyler came on the net it took everything I had to report I estimated our two companies had more than forty dead, approximately seventy wounded, and were missing up to another twenty. For the second time I experienced a long pause on the radio followed by a pained "out".

By now we had received over 900 artillery rounds in support of our fight on the hill. Fighting continued throughout the day with some indications that the enemy was trying to disengage. By now the battalion had added air power to the fray hitting targets well out from our position and along the trail we had planned to take a look at prior to this fight. Approximately thirty five air strikes supported this effort. I reported that we were losing contact and felt that the enemy was trying to escape. My estimate up the point of the three major enemy attacks was that they had well over 110 killed with no idea of the number of their wounded. With the action just completed my new estimate was twice that previously reported.

I then learned that the battalion headquarters had been hit earlier by a mortar round. That came as a surprise as we had not experienced any mortar fire on the hill. It also caused me to wonder as to their situation. With triple canopy jungle we were experiencing difficulty firing grenade launchers and thus had ruled out the use of mortars early in the fight. Earlier I became aware that A Company was tasked to attempt to get to us. As their lead platoon left the battalion base it was hit hard by an enemy force. In that contact A Company lost a platoon leader, Second Lieutenant David L. Uglund, a classmate of Lt. Thurston. Their effort to get to us was called off. Subsequently I received a report that my second platoon had spotted an element of A Company and may have taken fire from that element. Trying to confirm that

report I became convinced it was highly improbable because the A Company enemy contact occurred within about two hundred and fifty meters of the battalion base.



Sky Soldiers of the 1/503d hitting LZ King which was one of the few flat low brush areas in that sector. "The jungle there was so dense it took three days to travel from LZ King to Hill 65. We received some incoming fire coming into the LZ on the 5th of November but didn't hear another round until the morning of the 8th of November."

Dutch Holland, B/1/503d

[Photo provided by Dutch]

At about the same time I received two disturbing reports; one from my second platoon and one from Captain Tucker, of the enemy in differing types of uniforms and some wearing helmets. The same report came from the only survivor of the seventeen missing from C Company on the following day.

Having learned of the details of the failed A Company effort and the mortar attack on the battalion, a third even greater disappointment was yet to come. The 1st Infantry Division had been requested to deploy a battalion in support of the battle and the reported response was, "***We are still training and not ready to fight!***" Upon receiving that message I made a number of crude comments and even thought worse. I doubted that I would ever forget that message. That historic division deserved better! Fortunately, they were to get a new and great Division Commander shortly after this battle and many of those commanders who believed they had come to Vietnam to train lost their commands.

(continued...)



Ever so gradually fires were falling off. At around 1600 hours, one of my rifle squad leaders, Staff Sergeant Billie R. Wear, from the third platoon approached me and asked if we would make an attempt to recover Lt. Thurston from the battlefield. I told him we had to get him but I would need help. SSgt Wear said he knew where Lt. Thurston had fallen and he was willing to lead a recovery effort. I approved the effort but stated I was going with him. After some brief exchange we moved out and at approximately 1625 hours an improvised squad of the third platoon, made up mostly of non-commissioned officers, lead by SSgt Wear, recovered the remains of their fallen leader. While not probably the wisest decision on my part, I felt compelled to follow the squad in this recovery and I understood the unusual composition of that squad. Later, some would claim I lead the effort. That was not the case. I had become a rifleman because we had lost one of my lieutenants and I wanted him back under any circumstance.

**Michael Milton Medley, B/1/503d
KIA, 8 Nov 65**

"There is not a lot I can say about my uncle. He was killed before I was ever born. But in my eyes you were a hero and still are one. You died for something you believed in doing and that was putting everyone before you, even your country. You were the first one killed from your city. You are remembered every day as I look at my daughter - she was named after you. We tell her about you and what you and many others did for all of us - how you protected us and gave us a better place to live. I am sorry for the way others acted and treated the ones that got to come back home. At least you didn't have to feel ashamed for what you did like so many others had to feel. I know we all have to go some time but to me you died honorably and as a hero in my eyes and many others' eyes as well. To all of our armed forces men and women - you are heroes. May God bless you all and the families of loved ones lost or missing. May God bless us all."

Love from Terri, Michelle, and family

With the recovery of Lt. Thurston, we had accounted for all members of my command. We had yet to find seventeen missing from C Company. We all knew we would not leave this battlefield without them.

With contact apparently broken, I set about the task of trying to get our critically wounded out, get more ammunition in, and to prepare to secure the position for the night. We continued our attempt to clear an area to get helicopters in to carry our wounded out. It didn't take us much longer to realize we couldn't get it done prior to dark with what we had to work with. With a lot of effort from the battalion, the Air Force came to our

rescue. From the Bien Hoa Air Base they sent a fire-fighting helicopter to hover above us while lowering a basket. Five times, over five trips we put a critically wounded paratrooper in a basket they lowered through the canopy, and five times the Air Force winched our troopers through that triple canopy jungle in an attempt to save each of them. They succeeded and were willing to continue to try and save more as it began to get dark. It was a painful decision but I called them off. It was getting dark and not only could we not hear the battlefield with the aircraft hovering above us, we now could not see to our front. The risk was becoming too great to go on with it.

I knew we would lose more wounded through the night. Because of their efforts all five survived. In between the Air Force flights, we were resupplied by an Army helicopter dropping their bundles through the jungle canopy with but one mishap. In coding a resupply message I mistakenly called for one hundred trip flares when I had intended to order one hundred claymore mines. Nonetheless, we made good use of the trip flares and fortunately none of them went off during the night.

Early in the evening I had many of the dead and wounded moved to the rear of my position on top of the hill. It was crowded and their suffering at times made it noisy. I felt we could better protect them from this position rather than place them at any further risk from another onslaught from the bottom of the hill. Through the night we lost one of our wounded. That they were able to hold that number to one was a tribute to the extraordinary efforts of our medics. Later, several days following the operation, I was indirectly criticized by medical personnel (none of which were with us on hill 65) in a battalion staff meeting not for my decision to call off the rescue helicopter but for having placed the dead and wounded so close to each other and so close to my command post. They gave me a lecture on "morale in combat." Frankly, I wasn't impressed and I told them so. In fact, they had a point. However, giving their timing and the alternatives we faced, I wasn't inclined to acknowledge their well reasoned arguments as I was troubled in my decision to call off the Air Force rescue helicopter. Colonel Tyler kindly intervened in the heated discussion and brought it to a halt.

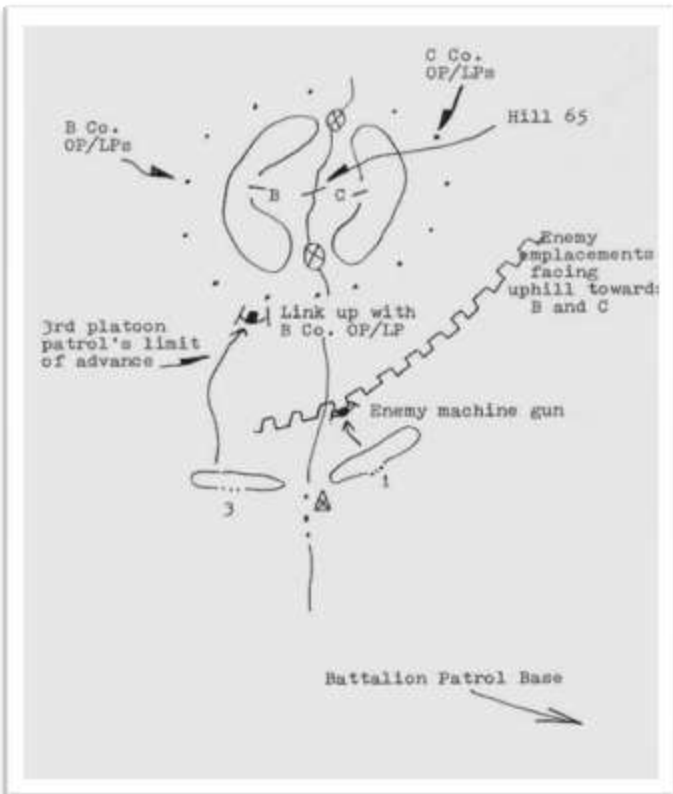
Early that evening we received a torrential rain, the last of the rainy season. Thankfully it didn't last long. We needed to be able to hear what might be going on around us. Throughout the night I paced the area, tried several times to rest on an enemy crafted log table, and listened, and listened....

(continued....)



...Above it all I wanted to hear the sound of the battlefield. It was deadly quiet even with the suffering of our wounded.

My mind now centered on how we were going to get our remaining wounded and dead out of this place. We couldn't walk and carry them out except at great risk to them. Some of the wounded just couldn't make that trip. I had no idea as to the situation at the battalion base. I realized we weren't going to get any outside help, no one was coming to us. The Air Force had done a great job penetrating the jungle with their basket but we had too many wounded to count on that again. We hadn't made much progress on a landing zone. We had to do better and we were going to have to do it on our own. How? I talked with Captain Tucker and we came up with a plan. We would call for chain saws and explosives. We would open a hole in this jungle and get helicopters on the ground to get them out. By first light we were ready.



As light broke through the jungle on Tuesday, November 9, 1965 all our leaders knew what to do and were moving. Medical evacuation helicopters, gunships, and Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson, Commander 173d Airborne Brigade, in his command helicopter were above us. I cautioned them to keep the helicopters clear of us so we could hear. Just having them near was a help to us. We had three tasks to accomplish: First, we had to probe forward of the perimeter and determine if the enemy was there. Second, we had to find the missing soldiers from C Company, and third, we had to create a hole in the jungle. How the first task played out would determine how difficult this day would be.

The answer to the first task came quickly. The enemy had fled leaving many of their dead (some reportedly stripped of their uniforms). The second task was left to C Company and they soon found their missing in a number of locations. Amongst the last of the seventeen missing they found one alive. He had spent a day on the battlefield playing dead surrounded by the enemy.

Cutting a hole in the jungle, our third task, turned out to be a lot tougher than we had imagined. The Air Force dropped us the saws but they were impossible against teakwood trees. Dynamite did the job but created a hell of a mess that had to be cleared. Everyone helped, some to the point of exhaustion. When we thought we had finally got the job done we called for a medical evacuation helicopter (Dust Off).

From the air our cutout in the jungle must have looked like a pin hole. They needed an opening twice as large if they were to get on the ground. We went back to work, blew out more trees. Still not good enough; they began dropping smoke grenades trying to mark areas that had to be taken out. The troops kept at it taking turns working on a landing zone and guarding the perimeter. It was still not good enough.

Finally, General Williamson radioed he was coming in. He stripped his aircraft and started the descent. Some of us knew his pilot, WO Charles Smith, and believed if there ever was someone to take on this task he was the guy. It was slow, we could feel the helicopter vibrate, we watched WO Smith thread the needle, descending some 200 to 250 feet with little room to clear the blades, he put the helicopter on the ground. General Williamson jumped out of the aircraft and told me to load it up. The General spotted our dead, all covered in ponchos, stopped, looked at them, and seemingly paused to say a prayer. I moved away.

We put as many wounded on the aircraft as we could and WO Smith started his vertical climb out of the jungle. We held our breath. This was even slower than when he came in. He cleared the trees and we began to breathe again. Now we knew the "Dust Off" would be coming in. They came and left as fast as we could load them. On each descent and as each lifted off we prayed. I marveled at those pilots. In about two hours all the wounded were on their way to the Third Surgical Hospital and our dead were beginning their long journey home to their loved ones. We would say our last goodbye at a memorial service on November 15.

(continued...)





Lieutenant Colonel John Tyler, Commanding Officer of the 1/503d Airborne Battalion, standing on the veranda of his quarters which were built for him by his men. Tyler was an aggressive commander who epitomized the motto "Airborne...All The Way".

I expected one more helicopter to come in and get the General out. He said no, he was walking out with us. I hadn't anticipated this and quickly became concerned as did the troops around me. We didn't know the situation between our position and the battalion base. He had done enough getting our dead and wounded out. We needed him, but others need him more. How in the hell were we going to protect him, why take the chance? I called Colonel Tyler and asked him to intervene. He had never failed me before but this time he would. The General stood firm. Colonel Tyler ordered me to take it very slow and get him back to his location. I got the message. We weren't going to lose this guy.

The General, knowing of my concern, simply smiled at me and with confidence said "Let me know when you're ready." With that I said that B Company would take the lead, left him with Captain Tucker, and began to organize the march to the battalion base. I made sure everyone knew we had the General with us, we would move slowly and we would not be taking any chances. The troops shared my concern and seemed to get a very determined look in their eyes. They knew they had another job to do and they were ready. Once organized, I asked General Williamson to follow my command element. With that I grabbed the radio and ordered the company to "move out." While very tired, the troops were superb, and just as in the poem by SP4 Kenny:

*The guys no longer look tired,
They've a determined look of eye
As they scan the shrouded flanks
And treetops that hide the sky.*

We moved slowly, well spread out, followed by C Company. Within an hour we closed on the battalion base. I put my unit on the perimeter and stood on that

perimeter until the last paratrooper of C Company closed the position. That last man straightened up and said, "All the Way, Sir." I responded proudly, "Airborne." B Company had done its job, we had C Company back; we were dirty, tired and proud!

From the battalion base, C Company was the first to liftoff for the return flight to our base camp at Bien Hoa. C Company was followed by the extraction of A Company, and then my company. Generally I would lift out with my headquarters following my company. In this case we stayed on the ground until the battalion headquarters flew out. Just prior to the liftoff of the headquarters we heard small arms fire coming from the jungle. Gunships were returning fire as we extracted.

Upon closing at our Bien Hoa base camp I reported all my personnel and weapons accounted for and headed for the hospital. Having a bit of a phobia on being in a hospital, usually getting sick to my stomach if there more than about fifteen minutes, it became my habit to get there as quickly as possible to avoid any excuses. More importantly, I wanted our wounded to know they were uppermost in our minds and we wanted them back as quickly as possible. This time I had a change of heart.

While on the chopper returning to Bien Hoa I recalled the number of my soldiers wounded and killed on this operation that had been wounded on prior operations.

While there were more, three stuck in my mind and two of those were dead. The dead were Lt. Thurston and Specialist 4th Class Wayne W. Humphries. Both had been wounded in action in early October near Ben Cat as we penetrated the "Iron Triangle." The third was seriously wounded and I wondered if he would even live. In the past we allowed our wounded to choose if they would return to the unit or go home. I could not recall a case where they chose to go home. It was time to say "enough" even to one tough paratrooper.



**Craig Ford C/1/503d
Survivor Hill 65**

(continued...)





Survivor Hill 65. "A photo of LT Billie Wear (battlefield commission, Korea). Look at his chest full of combat valor and achievement!" Dutch Holland, B/1/503d

When I found my third man at the hospital I said "You're going home." Angered, he put on quite a scene. I had to chase away some medical personnel that wanted to restrain him. He pleaded to return to the unit. I held fast. Finally, telling him I would be back to see him, went outside to get some air. He was hurt too much to return anyway, they had to evacuate him. With that feisty spirit I knew he would make it. I saw him again in a military hospital on my way to Fort Benning. He was still recovering in a ward with one of our great leaders, Platoon Sergeant Adam A. Bernosky of the first platoon. Bernosky was seriously wounded on March 16, 1966 during an operation near Phuoc Vinh where B Company was the lead company of the First Battalion 503d Infantry going to the aid of another unit, this time the Second Battalion 503d Infantry.

I then visited the other wounded. Here my notes on the wounded are mixed with wounded from another fight. On New Year's Day 1966, during Operation Marauder on the "Plain of Reeds" west of the Oriental River near Kien Tuong, B Company again had to go to the aid of C Company. My recall of those wounded on hill 65 may include some wounded from the New Year's Day fight. In any case, from the second platoon I talked with PFC John C. "Dutch" Holland, PFC Larry Anderson, PFC Ronald G. Apodaca, Specialist 4th Class Wallace S. Tao and Sgt. Theodore Shamblin. Sgt. Shamblin was hurt so badly that he would be evacuated and subsequently die on November 11th.

From the first and third platoons I talked with several of my soldiers recalling only PFC Manual Garza, SSG Wallace A. Warden and Sgt. Hector Membreno. This group was doing very well, but were anxious to find out more on the fight. I could not see several soldiers as

they were still being worked on or were in recovery. I spoke briefly with Chaplain Hutchens, he still had that rare smile, looked good and was collecting visitors to the point that some wanted us out of there. General William C. Westmoreland visited our wounded the following morning, November 10th. Late in the day I got called away from the hospital with an urgent message to return to my unit. General Westmoreland would also be visiting my company.



Upon my return I found more chaos in my orderly room than I experienced during the fight. It seemed everyone from the battalion and brigade staffs wanted to help us get ready for the Generals' visit. Still thinking about my soldiers in the hospital, being tired and dirty, having not slept, shaved or washed in two days, I had little patience and sent some folks packing. They got the message and I didn't get any more help, guidance or visitors until the General arrived the next day. In preparation for his visit I called my Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants together and issued my instructions. They were simple and prioritized; first, get a shave and a shower, get some chow, get to sleep, and tomorrow morning we'll start our "six-hour drill." I saw a wall of smiles, we had a plan and they liked it.

(continued....)





Husky at Hill 65.

(Sent in by Craig Ford, C/1/503)

Our six-hour drill originated from an earlier experience where we witnessed another company coming off an operation and a commander allowing his troops to soak up much-too-much beer. The sad result was troops feeling sorry for themselves, second guessing each other and even blaming each other for some of their casualties. The end result was a unit out of control until they sobered-up. Our drill focused minds and energy on getting ready for the next operation, highlighted by my conduct of a "stand by" 100 percent inspection of everyone and everything we owned, and to whichever platoon fared the worse the honor of pulling all major details until we moved out on the next operation. General Westmoreland would never know he was the inspector on this one.

The visit of General Westmoreland was great. Accompanying the General was Colonel Tyler and General Williamson. General Westmoreland talked with each of my soldiers. It was a "standby." I led him to each soldier in their squad tent. As he entered each tent our troops were called to attention and then instructed to continue working on their equipment as part of the six-hour drill. As I approached their bunks the soldiers came to attention, I stepped aside and the General stood toe-to-toe with each of them. He usually began by asking them if they were in the fight. He would go on to ask if they had fired their weapon. All but one of my soldiers responded they had fired their weapon. When that soldier was asked why he didn't fire his weapon, he responded, *"Sir, I'm a Grenadier, I was so damn busy firing a M60 Machine Gun, a M16 Rifle and my .45, I never got to my Grenade Launcher."* Then it would get more personnel with questions on where they came from, how long they has been in the Army, their assignments and the like. One of my soldiers with a speech defect felt pushed to the point that after several questions, the last of which was, *"How do you know you*

killed the enemy?" responded without a stutter, *"Because I got his blood all over me."* While they talked I would look at their weapons and equipment.

Later the troops would tell me how much they appreciated getting the opportunity to stand toe-to-toe with the General. Others thanked me for not having the usual formation in the sun with someone simply talking to them. As I accompanied General Westmoreland back to his helicopter he stopped, turned toward me and asked *"Captain Bittrich, you're really proud of your soldiers aren't you?"* I was and I told him so. He asked if we needed anything. I responded we didn't. Later some of my troops would say I blew that question. Finally he asked how long it would take us to be ready for another mission. I told him we were ready now! He said he always enjoyed the opportunity to talk with paratroopers and thanked me. We exchanged salutes and I left him with General Williamson and Colonel Tyler.

I called my leaders together, informed them as to the General's comments, thanked them and announced a winner (that I can't recall) of the six-hour drill. Then I began the sad process of writing letters to the parents and loved ones of our dead.



Survivor Hill 65. Dutch Holland, B/1/503d

On Friday, November 12, 1965 Brig. Gen. Williamson, Capt. Tucker, Sgt. Sylvester Bryant, SSGT. Wear and I briefed the Saigon press, derisively referred to as the five o'clock follies, on the operation....

(continued.)



....We got a lot of questions on "being ambushed" and "fallen into a Viet Cong trap." General Williamson took those head-on as nonsense. Tucker reported, "*They began charging in human waves with bugles blaring.*" I reported, "*We killed about 90 Viet Cong as we busted through one of their encirclements.*" To another question I responded, "*When we finally fought our way to the top of the hill, we counted 111 Viet Cong bodies lying there.*" SSgt Wear offered, "*I don't know what VC unit was there, but I know the other side knows we were there and won't want to tangle with the 173d again for a long time.*" The most quotable quote was offered by Sgt. Bryant, "*I figure the Viet Cong would have been able to hold roll call the next morning in a telephone booth.*" I laughed for the first time in days.



Survivor Hill 65, Sam Scrimager B/1/503d

For several days the press continued to report the battle. Reporter Tom Tiede published a detailed account of Specialist 4th Class Langston and the paratroopers cut off during the battle. He published a second article

covering PFC Terry Hinson, his role in the fight, and the fact that he was seventeen years old. That article caused a reaction in the states that would lead to us sending Terry and all seventeen year old soldiers home. He published a third story covering PFC Edward C. Bable and his effort to save his wounded buddies.



Survivor Hill 65, SFC Bernosky B/1/503d

Joseph Alsop from Washington gave an account of the battle. A UPI headline article appeared in the "*Saigon Daily News*" on November 9th and other headline articles appeared in the "*Pacific Stars and Stripes*" and "*The Saigon Post*" on Wednesday, November 10th. Several of their reports carried the line that the battle for hill 65 had been the biggest battle of the war up to that time. As we were honoring our dead the 1st Air Cavalry Division would lay claim to that record as they fought North Vietnam regulars from November 14 to 19 in a battle for the Ia Drang Valley.

(Hill 65 continued....)



Presidential Unit Citation Awarded to the 1/503d and attached units

(Originally awarded as a “Distinguished Unit Citation”)



DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION. Award of the Distinguished Unit Citation by the President of the United States is confirmed in accordance with paragraph 194, AR 672-5-1. The text of the citation as announced by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 20 June 1966 reads as follows:

“By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States I have today (20 June 1966) awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation (First Oak Leaf Cluster) for extraordinary heroism to:

THE 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 503D INFANTRY, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE) UNITED STATES ARMY and the Attached Units....HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, COMPANY A, COMPANY B, AND COMPANY C of the 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 503D INFANTRY, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE), THE 1ST TEAM OF THE 3RD RADIO RELAY UNIT, THE COMPOSITE SQUAD OF THE 173D ENGINEER COMPANY.

The foregoing companies of and units attached to THE 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 503D INFANTRY, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE) distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism in action against hostile forces in the vicinity of Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, on 8 November 1965. The morning after the Battalion had conducted a search operation and learned from patrols that a strong hostile element was in the general area, COMPANY C, the lead Company, encountered a well-entrenched and camouflaged Viet Cong

force. When the insurgents opened fire with a volume of automatic weapons fire, the United States forces retaliated. As the battle grew in intensity and it became evident that COMPANY C had engaged a battalion-size Viet Cong element which attempted to surround the flanks of this American unit, COMPANY B was committed to secure the right flank of COMPANY C. Simultaneously, elements of COMPANY A attacked the left flank of the insurgent force. Although COMPANY B met strong resistance and fought at close range in a dense jungle area, it succeeded in penetrating the hostile circle around COMPANY C. Then, as COMPANY B’s open flank was being enveloped, the brave men of this Company broke a hostile encirclement for the second time. Despite the constant Viet Cong assaults, their continual attacks in human waves, and the many casualties sustained by the American units, the gallant and determined troops of the 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 503D INFANTRY repulsed the Viet Cong and inflicted severe losses upon them. After a battle which raged throughout the afternoon, elements of THE 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE), 503D INFANTRY defeated a numerically superior hostile force and, on the following morning, counted four hundred and three Viet Cong dead in the immediate area. The devotion to duty, perseverance, and extraordinary heroism displayed by these members of THE 1ST BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 503D INFANTRY and the attached units are in the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon themselves and the armed forces of their country.”



~ In Memoriam ~

The result of the battle was heavy losses on both sides - 49 Sky Soldiers dead, many more wounded, and hundreds of dead enemy troops.

A Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry

PFC John E. Hannigan, Antioch, CA
PSGT Leroy Hill, Washington, DC
PFC Samuel S. Tolliver, Richmond, VA
2LT David L. Ugland, Minneapolis, MN

B Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry

SFC Bryant Brayboy, Philadelphia, PA
PFC Herman Brown, Richlands, VA
SSG Magno Campos, Lahaina, HI
SFC Henry T. Cannon, Jacksonville, FL
PFC Lavallo E. Carlton, Cleveland, OH
PFC Gary L. Elmore, Garden City, MI
SP4 Everett W. Goias, San Francisco, CA
PFC Kenneth E. Graham, Defiance, OH
SGT Rebel L. Holcomb, Wichita, KS
SGT Lawrence P. Howard, Philadelphia, PA
SP4 Wayne W. Humphries, Shawnee, OK
SGT David L. Keel, Houston, TX
PFC Michael M. Medley, Jackson, MI
PVT Charles L. Mitchell, New York, NY
PFC Jerry L. Potter, Englewood, CO
PFC Michael P. Russo, New York, NY
SSG Theodore Shamblin, Fayettev., WV
2LT Clair H. Thurston, Thorndike, ME
PFC Danny R. Ward, Beauty, KY
PFC Kelly E. Whitaker, Memphis, TN



C Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry

PFC Rudolph R. Aguilar, Los Angeles, CA
SP4 James Belton, State Park, SC
PFC Byron J. Foster, Detroit, MI
PFC Joseph T. Hamilton, Philadelphia, PA
SP4 Robert W. Harden, Waycross, GA
SSG Clifton W. Harrington, Aberdeen, NC
SGT John A. Hughlett, Brighton, TN
SGT Theodore R. Jones, Auburn, NE
CPL Cleo Lockett, Birmingham, AL
PFC Valentine Marquez, Wiley, CO
PFC Michael K. Mathison, East St Louis, IL
PFC Harold M. Smith, Sumter, SC
PFC Daniel J. Sobota, Peoria, IL
SP4 Cordell Spencer, Bessemer, AL
SP4 Scip Tate, Newark, NJ
SP4 Thomas A. Turnage, Texarkana, AR
SP4 George Vincent, Los Angeles, CA
SGT Troy B. Williams, Mount Hope, WV

Headquarters Co., 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry

PFC Harold Goldman, Ocala, FL
SP4 John A. Nathan, San Francisco, CA
PFC Dennis D. Rutowski, Waterford, WI

A Company, 2nd Bn, 503rd Infantry

SSG Samuel A. Eidson, North Birmingham, AL

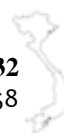
173rd Engineer Company

PFC Davis Uptain, Fayette, AL

C Battery, 3rd Bn, 319th Artillery

SGT Lloyd V. Greene, Paterson, NJ
PFC Steve I. Orris, Wayne, MI

~ All The Way Brothers ~



8th of November



Said goodbye to his mamma
As he left South Dakota
To fight for the Red, White, and Blue.
He was nineteen and green with a new M-16
Just doing what he had to do.

He was dropped in the jungle
Where the choppers would rumble
With the smell of napalm in the air.
And the sergeant said, "Look up ahead"

Like a dark, evil cloud
1,200 came down
on him and 29 more.
They fought for their lives
But most of them died
In the 173rd Airborne.

(Chorus)

On the 8th of November,
The angels were crying
As they carried his brothers away.
With the fire raining down
And the Hell all around
There were few men left standing that day.
Saw the eagle fly,
Through a clear, blue sky
1965, the 8th of November.

Now he's fifty-eight
And his ponytail's grey
But the battle still plays in his head.
He limps when he walks,
But he's strong when he talks
About the shrapnel they left in his leg.

He puts on a grey suit
Over his Airborne tattoo
And he ties it on one time a year
And remembers the fallen,
As he orders a tall one
And swallows it down with his tears.

(Chorus)

On the 8th of November,
The angels were crying
As they carried his brothers away.
With the fire raining down
And the Hell all around
There were few men left standing that day.
Saw the eagle fly,
Through a clear, blue sky
1965, the 8th of November.

Saw the eagle fly,
Through a clear, blue sky
1965.

(Chorus)

On the 8th of November,
The angels were crying

As they carried his brothers away.
With the fire raining down
And the Hell all around
There were few men left standing that day.

(Chorus)

On the 8th of November,
The angels were crying
As they carried his brothers away.
With the fire raining down
And the Hell all around,
There were few men left standing that day.
Saw the eagle fly,
Through a clear, blue sky
1965, the 8th of November.

The 8th of November
The 8th of November

He said goodbye to his mamma
As he left South Dakota
To fight for the Red, White, and Blue.
He was nineteen and green with a new M-16
Just doing what he had to do.

The lyrics of the refrain refer specifically to "1965, the 8th of November" in describing the battle. In the album version, Kris Kristofferson provides the introduction and explains the significance of November 8, 1965. The 173d Airborne Brigade was ambushed by Viet Cong during Operation Hump. One of the wounded, Niles Harris, was among the several soldiers saved by Lawrence Joel, who later became the first living black American to receive the Medal of Honor since the Spanish-American War. Years later, Harris gave Big Kenny (one half of the duo) the top hat he often wears in public appearances. The song itself is a mid-tempo set in triple meter, giving an account of Harris' life. In the first verse, at the age of 19, Harris joins the military to fight the Vietnamese. He ends up in Vietnam, "with the smell of napalm in the air." The thirty in his group are then ambushed, as earlier stated by Kristofferson. In the second verse, Harris, now 58, exhibits the lingering injuries he sustained during the war, but he is "strong when he talks" about his injuries and his memories of his fallen comrades. The song was nominated for the 2006 CMA Awards song of the year category; its music video was also nominated for video of the year categories for the CMAs, ACM Awards, and the 49th Annual Grammy Awards.



173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation

The 173d Spartan Club

In 480 BC, three hundred Spartans stood in a rocky mountain pass at Thermopylae and for seven days held off the mighty Persian army, allowing Greek forces to muster and eventually defeat the invaders. Three hundred warriors preserved the cradle of civilization. Three hundred Spartan Warriors made a difference.

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation needs the support of 300 warriors to preserve and maintain our Memorial that was dedicated in June 2010 at the National Infantry Museum campus near Fort Benning, Georgia.

The Memorial Foundation requires a minimum of \$5,000.00 annually for basic maintenance costs (electricity, landscaping and irrigation). In addition to periodic costs of adding new information to the Memorial, funds will be required for maintenance, minor repairs, insurance and the Foundation's administrative costs. To ensure perpetual care for the Memorial, the Foundation has established an endowment fund goal of \$300,000., raised over ten years, in addition to annual donations received from other sources.

The Foundation is seeking 300 warriors willing to help preserve our legacy and maintain our memorial. This letter constitutes your invitation to become a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation's *Spartan's Club*.

We ask each Spartan Club Commander to pledge between \$200.00 and \$1,000.00 for each of the next ten years. We ask each Spartan Club Centurion to Pledge between \$173.00 and \$199.00 for the same period and each Spartan Club Lancer to pledge between \$25.00 and \$172.00 for a similar period. If the Spartans contribute an average of \$100.00 each for the next ten years, the Foundation Endowment Fund will achieve its objective. Each Spartan Club member will receive periodic communications regarding events held at the Memorial, as well as receiving recognition in our annual programs and reports.

As with the Spartans at Thermopylae, the burden of preserving our memorial and heritage is shared equally regardless of position, title and rank. Membership in the Club is open to all Sky Soldiers, their families, and military and patriotic organizations and friends of the 173d. As in the past, we hope that you will accept this challenge and support your memorial.

Ken Smith, Chairman
173d Memorial Foundation

The 173d Spartan Club

I/We wish to share the honor of preserving our memorial and heritage as a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation *Spartan Club*.



Beginning in 2011, and for nine succeeding years thereafter, I pledge to donate the following amount each year to the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation:

As a **Spartan Club Commander** (\$200.00 or more)
\$ _____

As a **Spartan Club Centurion** (173.00 to \$199.00)
\$ _____

As a **Spartan Club Lancer** (\$25.00 to \$172.00)
\$ _____

(Please print)

Full Name: _____

Primary Telephone: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Please mail your signed pledge form and your check (payable to the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation) to:

173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation
1160 Lake Royale
Louisburg, NC 27549

Pledges may be paid electronically by going to the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation website at www.173dairbornememorial.org and clicking on the tab, "Memorial Donations."

To assist you in remembering the timing of your annual pledge donation, the Foundation will send you electronically or by mail a brief reminder.

Note: The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Fund has been granted 501(c)3 status by the Internal Revenue Service. Contributions may be deductible under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.



HONORING ARIZONA VIETNAM VETS

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and the Arizona Military Museum in conjunction with the Department of Defense 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War, will host a dinner *IN HONOR OF ARIZONA VIETNAM VETERANS*.



Special Guest Speaker:

General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (Ret)

WHEN: Saturday, October 22, 2011
No host bar: 5:30-6:30 pm
Dinner: 6:45 pm

WHERE: Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino
5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd.
Chandler, AZ 85226

PHONE: 800-946-4452

COST: \$40.00 per dinner. No Host Bar.

ATTIRE: Men: Coat and tie or open collar with dress Shirt.
Women: Semi-formal evening wear.

RSVP: You must register to attend. Seating is limited. Please RSVP (form follows) before October 14 to assure your attendance. For further information call: **602-253-2378 or 520-868-6777.**

In Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans, I (we) will attend the dinner *In Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans* on October 22, 2011 at Wild Horse Pass and Casino. There are _____ (number in this party) who is (are) Vietnam veteran(s) (Note: recipient of the Vietnam Service Medal and /or Vietnamese Campaign Medal or served in civilian or intelligence agency in country or in AO or served in the Republic of Vietnam armed forces). Please legibly print names of attendees included in your check. (Please copy form for additional names)

Contact Phone Number & Address:

Dinner is \$40.00 per person. Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$_____ for dinners in my group. Make Check payable to Arizona Military Museum, and mail to:

Arizona Vietnam Veterans Dinner
Attn: Joseph E. Abodeely, Director
AZ Military Museum
9014 North Wealth Road
Maricopa, Arizona 85139



Letter to the LT's Daughter

Hi Kristel:

My wife and I had an opportunity to visit with your Dad for the first time since his death. We attended our 45th high school reunion in Connecticut and then drove over to West Point. I was not surprised to see that Pete's grave is simple and consistent with what I have come to expect in most veteran's cemeteries where every grave stone is identical regardless of the rank of the person buried there. Pete would have wanted this being a real leader of men.

So you see, your Dad continues to live with the men he served with even in death, and he always will. He is also buried right next to a classmate who also died on "The Hill".

I hope you are doing well and life is good for you and your family.

Best Regards,

Roger Dick



Note: Roger served in C/2/503d with platoon leader 1LT Lantz, in C/2/503d during 1967. Nice letter to his daughter, G.I. Ed



And More Reunions of the Airborne Kind



503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association WWII, September 21 - 25, 2011, Denver, Colorado.

Contact:
Yolonda Goad
Tel: 303-682-0004
Eml: yolo@live.com



11th Airborne Division Association, 68th Reunion, September 25 - 29, 2011, Tucson, Arizona.

Contact:
Charles Magro
Tel: 256-247-7390



506th Association Rendezvous, (Fort Campbell), November 8 8 11, 2011, Oak Grove, Kentucky.

Contact:
COL Sean M. Jenkins
Tel: 270-439-1499



Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67 is having a reunion in Liberty, MO June 15 - 18 next year 2012. Base HQ will be Recon's Bob Stamburksy's Retro Bowl Entertainment Center. Liberty is a suburb of Kansas City. So far, about 12 members have indicated they will attend. Watch this space for details to follow.



42nd Infantry Platoon Scout Dog, 101st ABN Div.
Vietnam 66-71. October 7-8-9, 2011, Branson, Missouri.

Contact:
Jackie McIntyre
Tel: (612) 522-9377
Eml: 42ndmom@comcast.net



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Page 33.

Contact:
Dave Carmon
Eml: dcarmon@roadrunner.com
www.skysoldier17.com



2011 Louisville Medal of Honor Convention, September 28 - October 2, 2011, Louisville, Kentucky, hosted by the Medal of Honor Society. See Page 34 for more details.

Contact:
Connie Mullaney-Pearl
Eml: connie.pearl@insightbb.com



The 2011 All Ohio Days, September 29 – October 1, 2011, Dayton, Ohio, hosted by the General M.B. Ridgway Chapter.

Contact:
Steve Jessie Ridgway, Chairman
Tel: 513-377-0866
or
Jerry Swigart
Tel: 937-898-2089

Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne Reunions please send details to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

***“No one appreciates
the very special genius
of your conversations
as a dog does.”***

~ Christopher Morley



2/503d Grunt & Photog

My name is John Hosier. I arrived in the Nam in October '67 with the 101st, was transferred to the 173d late November after Dak To as a replacement. Ended up in An Khe and then off to areas near Pleiku and Kontum and throughout those mountains with the 2nd Bat, then the 3rd Bat. Was wounded in December and transferred back to An Khe and given a nice safe job...combat photographer. Spent all of '68 between the battalions mostly working out of LZ English and Bong Son.

I have lots of photographs of the Herd from those dates and all of the units. They are in the newsletters, magazines and yearbook. Now have an exhibit that travels with one of the moving walls. About 1000 pictures and 2000 pieces of memorabilia including weapons, uniforms and everything in between dedicated to the Herd. The exhibit is free and fills seven tents.

Am on the road and will be in Akron Ohio August 16-21 then , Des Moines Iowa, New Iberia, Louisiana, and end up at the VA on Long Island followed by two weeks on the USS Intrepid in Manhattan, 6 - 21 November. Would love to have any Herd members, old, new, from any unit visit. If you would like more info you can contact me at my email address below.

Also would like to provide 2nd Bat photos from '67-'68-'71 and '72 for our newsletter with names and stories that I had written down. Many of the photos I know when and where but not who. might be of interest. I never was smart enough to build a web site, maybe in the future.

Want to say welcome home brothers, I love you guys and continue to heal and share our special relationships with all I meet. Thanks.

John "Fribley" Hosier O'Fallon
eravietnam@yahoo.com

"I would say that the war correspondent gets more drinks, more girls, better pay, and greater freedom than the soldier, but at this stage of the game, having the freedom to choose his spot and being allowed to be a coward and not be executed for it is his torture."

~ Robert Capa
Correspondent WWII



173d Airborne Brigade Alumni and Friends: *Drive On*

This is a lesser-known song by Johnny Cash, one of a very few musicians who sang positively about the American soldier and who obviously understood many of the personal aspects of which soldiers thought. On Okinawa and later, we in Bravo Company said, "Take two salt tablets and Drive on." I intended this phrase and what it conveyed to be an encouragement to NOT QUITTING/NOT GIVING UP. Nothing stopped us, and I and many others still use the motivation of this thought even today.

Later in the war, at some point, the emotional burden for many became too heavy and they tried to protect themselves by disassociating from every event that might weigh more heavily on their spirits. As an officer, I did the same but attempted to not be as callous as this song indicates. A worthy, necessary defense in times of overwhelming grief.

I often think back to those days of jungled yesterday and wanted to say that you, all, are still in my thoughts and my heart.

Fondest Airborne regards,

BDQ Roy

Roy Lombardo
CO B/2/503d

Johnny Cash – Drive On
www.youtube.com



~ The Virtual Wall ~



First click on a state. When it opens, scroll down to the city and the names will appear. Then click on their names. It should show you a picture of the person, or at least their bio and medals.

This really is an amazing web site. Someone spent a lot of time and effort to create it. I hope that everyone who receives this appreciates what those who served in Vietnam sacrificed for our country.

The link below is a virtual wall of all those lost during the Vietnam war with the names, bio's and other information on our lost heroes. Those who remember that time frame, or perhaps lost friends or family can look them up on this site. Pass the link on to others, as many knew wonderful people whose names are listed.

<http://www.virtualwall.org/iStates.htm>

[Sent in by MG Jack Leide, CO C/2/503d, '66/'67]

RAFFLE... WIN \$500. ~

173d Chapter 17 Fund Raiser. For those in your area wishing to purchase Chapter 17 raffle tickets contact Jim Haynes at (614) 746-5605, E-mail at

Jhaynes6@columbus.rr.com

All essential information is on the ticket itself.

Winning drawing will be made in September at the Kokomo (Indiana) veterans' annual get-to-together.

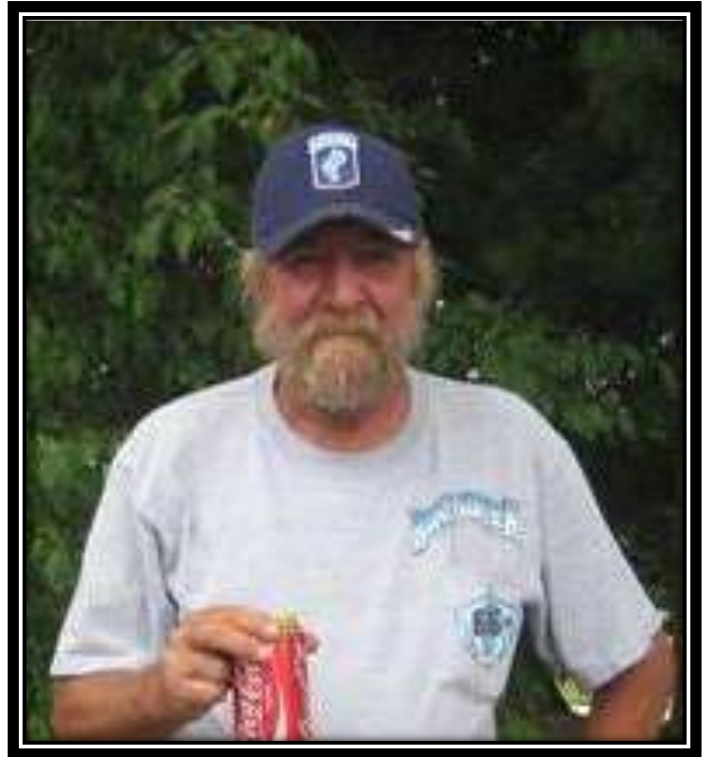


Ronald Howard Wiseman

A Sky Soldier

2/503d, '66/'67

December 26, 1946 – February 19, 2011



Beloved father of Susan and Kelly Wiseman. He fought with the 173d Airborne Brigade in the Vietnam War. Good friend to many war veterans and Sergeant-of-Arms of the Greenbelt, Maryland American Legion.

You will walk with us through our lives. We remember your love, spirit, and kindness.

Love Susan and Kelly Wiseman



Rest easy brother.



A SQUAD OF BRAVO BULLS AND THEIR CO'S WERE ALABAMA BOUND

Yesterday, 26 July 2011, we concluded a mini-reunion at my home here in south Alabama. Below is a picture of the attendees, all slightly worn, but still beautiful. Your Airborne brother,

Jim Green
B/2/503d



I'll agree, Jim, the guys in the back row appear kinda worn, but the CO's look great!! Ed

The young Bulls:



Jim



Phil



Virgil



Barry



Gary



The 2012 173d Reunion

Lexington, KY

June 6 -10, 2012

Hosted By Chapter 17

Room rate 115.00 plus tax per night with Free Parking

New/Registration fees:

Sky Soldiers 99.00

Spouses & Guests 75.00

Gold Star 75.00

Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner

The Hyatt is taking reservations now.

Call 800.233.1234

Ask for the 173 Airborne guestroom block or code G-173A.

Also use this code when making reservations on-line
at the Lexington-Hyatt website - www.lexington.hyatt.com

Information and Forms will be posted soon at www.skysoldier.org and www.Skysoldier17.com



Chapter 17 Needs Your Help

2011 173d Reunion Planning Meeting

Tuesday, August 9th @ 6 p.m., the 2012 173d Reunion Team will be in Lexington, KY at the Hyatt lobby, 401 West High Street. We have set a specific time aside Tuesday evening to meet with chapter members willing to step up and support or volunteer to help with the planning.



Your minds, bodies, ideas and connections are needed to help make the **2012 173d Reunion** happen, "so take up the slack rope man" and call Roy, Dave or myself to let us know if you will show. Plans are to head out to a favorite local buffet to eat and meet. All are welcome, even if you just want to hang out.

Now is the time, will YOU be there?

Call Dave at **740-574-8653** or email me today at the address below.

Airborne.....All The Way!!!

Skip Kniley
Sc7skyvan@aol.com



Lexington and the Bluegrass Rich in Reminder of Bygone Days.

Until time travel becomes possible, the best way to revisit the past is through its tangible remains...
...the houses and other places where famous, as well as not-so-famous, people lived and gathered ...
... the battlefields and buildings where the courses both of history, and many lives, were swayed...
... the monuments built to honor, and to deliver to posterity, the heroes of each generation.

In Lexington and the Bluegrass region, there's a lot of history to be re-lived. This was the first part of Kentucky to be settled, and the beginning of the American West. The Civil War deeply divided the state but, fortunately, left most antebellum houses and buildings intact. Many national leaders and other prominent individuals of 18th and 19th century America had a connection to Lexington.

Whether you are searching for relics of past eras and interesting people, examples of architectural worth, or scenes of noteworthy events, you'll find plenty of fascinating historic homes and places to explore in and around Lexington.



Hello Ladies & Gentlemen!

Following is information on the *Medal of Honor Society Convention*. Louisville will be hosting approximately 50 Medal of Honor recipients on September 28 - October 2, 2011. The days will be filled with several events. Please visit our website for details:

www.2011cmohlouisville.org

The convention information is being updated daily.

Just some of the events being planned by the Host Committee include:

- **Medal of Honor Recipient Outreach Day (Recipients visit schools)**
- **Kentucky's Patriotic Event for the public, "A Tribute to American Valor" at the YUM Center.**
- **Patriot Gala Dinner**
- **Golf at Valhalla**
- **Book Autograph Signing Session (open to the public)**

"Louisville is proud to have been chosen to host our Nation's most decorated war heroes at the 2011 Medal of Honor Society Convention. On behalf of our patriotic community and our 'Old Kentucky Home,' we welcome our Medal of Honor Recipients as our country celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Medal's creation."

I am very excited to be a part of the volunteer team. If you do decide to visit Louisville, I, along with my father, Jim Mullaney will be pleased to meet you. If you have any questions, please contact me at my email address.

Regards,

Connie Mullaney-Pearl
connie.pearl@insightbb.com



Note: Connie's dad, Jim, is a veteran who served with the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team in the Pacific during WWII.

"Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure"
~ **President Abraham Lincoln**



RANGERS/LRRPS/LRPS

Vietnam Era: February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975. Since WWII the U.S. Army has had a need for small, highly trained, far ranging units to perform reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition, and special type combat missions. In Vietnam this need was met by instituting a long range patrol program to provide each major combat unit with this special capability. These patrols would conduct long-range reconnaissance and exploitation operations into enemy-held and denied areas, providing valuable combat intelligence.



74th LRP Det with 173d "Herd" Team Alpha. L-R: Stamper, Jim Glenn (WIA), Jim Grey (WIA), Sonny Reynaga, John Knaus (KIA)

Approximately five (5) years into the Southeast Asia conflict (1966), LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) units began to be assembled and trained for the purpose of conducting recon and combat patrols in the VCs (Viet Cong's) backyard (4 to 12-man patrols); counter-insurgency (CI) warfare in a non-linear or asymmetrical jungle battlefield; the four (4) to eight (8) man patrol being the preferred configuration. At times two-man LRRP teams were employed. [COIN: Counter-Insurgency]

At first both airborne and non-airborne volunteer soldiers were trained (LRRP/LRP infantry companies). Initially divisions were authorized to form provisional LRRP companies and brigades were authorized LRRP detachments. The 'detachment' concept did not enjoy the same level of development and employment as the LRRP 'companies' did. Between 1967 and 1973 LRRP/LRP companies worked for divisions, separate brigades, and field force commanders. LRRPs provided ground force commanders with intelligence on the tactical situation in their areas of responsibility (AOR). LRRPs were also tasked with behind the lines direct action (DA) missions. The small teams (patrols)

attacked Viet Cong (VC) supply areas, tracked enemy units, directed artillery/air strikes, and harassed the VC and NVA units. By 1967 all LRRP companies had been re-designated LRP (Long Range Patrol) since from the inception their missions did not only involve deep jungle reconnaissance.



1965 173d LRRP, Back: Williams, Baker, Thomas, Farley, Smith, Christenson, Front: Beauchamp, Zions (both KIA)

By 1967 thirteen (13) of these companies had been formed and attached to larger infantry, airborne, and cavalry units (divisions), one LRP company being an Army National Guard (ARNG) unit [D Company (Ranger) 151st Infantry (Airborne), Indiana ARNG]. By 1969 the bulk of LRP troopers were airborne infantrymen and would claim lineage with WWII

Rangers, Korean War Rangers, and "Merrill's Marauders" (the Marauder crest and was (approved on March 18, 1969). Also in '69 all LRP companies were designated "(Ranger), 75th Infantry" (provisional), and like their WWII and Korea predecessors, they too would resurrect the Ranger scroll and wear them unofficially along with black berets. On occasion the scroll would be worn over their higher command unit patch, and like the RICA scroll included the words "Airborne/Ranger." A few 'Nam Ranger companies also wore scrolls on black berets over jump wings.



N Co. Ranger Team Foxtrot '69/'70

(continued....)





N Company Rangers with 173d Herd 1970 - Team Echo (top) Charley Cash, ALT Bruce Candrl, TL Sam Schrio, RTO (front) Unknown, Mike, Larry

Between 1968 and 1972 LRRP/LRP/Ranger company leadership (officers, NCOs and promotable E-4s) were also sent to the MACV Recondo school, training conducted by Special Forces (Green Beret) instructors (cadre from the 5th Special Forces Group, Nha Trang, South Vietnam). For graduation Recondo training included a real patrol in “Charlie’s” backyard west of Nha Trang. The priority for Recondo school was to train LRP team leaders and assistant TLs. Imitation Recondo schools in the army surfaced after ‘Nam but nothing compared to the 3-week 5th SFG(A) course in a real combat area of operations (AO). In addition to the Rangers, the USMC and Army Green Berets (Special Forces) would also form and employ the small unit LRP concept during the last 7 years of the Southeast Asia conflict (1967 – 1974). On September 5th, 1967 a USMC LRRP team (1st LRRP) conducted a parachute insertion as part of *Operation Oregon*. The USN SEALs would also employ behind the lines small unit CI/CG (counter-insurgency/counter-guerilla) tactics against the VC and NVA during the war (1965-1973). By 1973 ‘Nam Ranger companies were disbanded but a few remained active in CONUS (including reserve/guard) and in Europe.

By the late ‘80s the Army’s LRP company concept would evolve into airborne Long Range Surveillance (LRS) detachments (LRSDs: Division asset) and companies (LRSCs: Corps asset), and were retrained to avoid enemy contact and perform passive surveillance

intelligence gathering missions. LRSUs retained SOF like sea, air, and land infiltration and exfiltration capabilities. In the early 90s LRS units (LRSUs) were directed to drop red, black, and white ‘LRS scrolls’ for higher command or military intelligence (MI) SSIs. As airborne units their new SSIs included ‘airborne tabs’, the tabs distinguished them as LRSUs within the MI community. LRS doctrine (FM 7-93) encourages ranger qualified NCOs and officers. Currently in addition to the Ranger course, the RTB at Ft. Benning, GA also conducts the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leaders Course (RSLC), the former LRSLC [Long Range Surveillance Leader’s Course].

From 1983 to 2001 U.S. Army LRS elements were deployed to Grenada, Desert Shield/Storm, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and used for counter-drug operations along the U.S./Mexico border. Core training for LRSUs includes infantry training, airborne school, Ranger school, RSLC, pathfinder, and SERE training. Since the beginning of the GWOT in late 2001 the enemy avoidance passive surveillance doctrine of LRS was modified [FRAGOed] to include reconnaissance and direct action (DA) missions in low-intensity asymmetrical counter-insurgency combat AOs. Army active duty (AD) and National Guard (NG) LRS units since 2002 have been deployed to the Middle East (Southwest Asia) in the continuing OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) and OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) efforts as part of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

RLTW!

Source:

www.shadowspear.com/vb/threads/history-of-the-scroll.566/

[Sent in by Robt. ‘twin’ Henriksen, 75th Ranger]



Ray Freeman, Rick Brooks, Art Silsby, Freddie Williams, Jeffrey McLaughlin



Medic Extraordinaire

Could you publish this picture in our next publication? This medic replaced Doc (Ken) Eastman. I took my fire team in on a rescue mission for a downed plane. I was sitting on the deck with my feet on the struts, and one of the members of my team was in the other door doing the same thing. This medic was sitting on the deck between us. We were on approach to the site when the chopper shook rather hard. I felt someone grab the back of my ruck and the chopper began auto rotating in. We had been hit and the entire tail of the chopper was gone. If this medic had not grabbed my ruck and that of the trooper in the other door we would have been thrown out of the craft. We crashed so hard it broke the 60's off their mounts and buried them in the mud. Anyhow, I do not remember his name, but I would really like to find him for obvious reasons. Thanks -

Joel Trenkle
B/2/503d
joelanddoni@msn.com



Note: Plans are still in the works to feature the brave Medics of the 2/503d and *all* 173d sister units. Please send your stories and photos to rto173d@cfl.rr.com
As Bob Beemer, B/2/503d so rightly said.....

“How do you write a story about the greatest people in the world? Everyone of them should receive a lifetime achievement award.”



Packers Visit with Herd Brother

Here is a picture of myself and oldest grandson Harrison with group of Green Bay Packers at our gun store in early June this year. During the lockout their offensive line came together in Nashville to practice and the shorter guy in the middle is Scott Wells, the starting center (smallest in the league) who lives here in Franklin, TN -- super nice guy. Haven't seen his Super Bowl ring yet since this was taken before they passed them out, but hopefully, in the future.

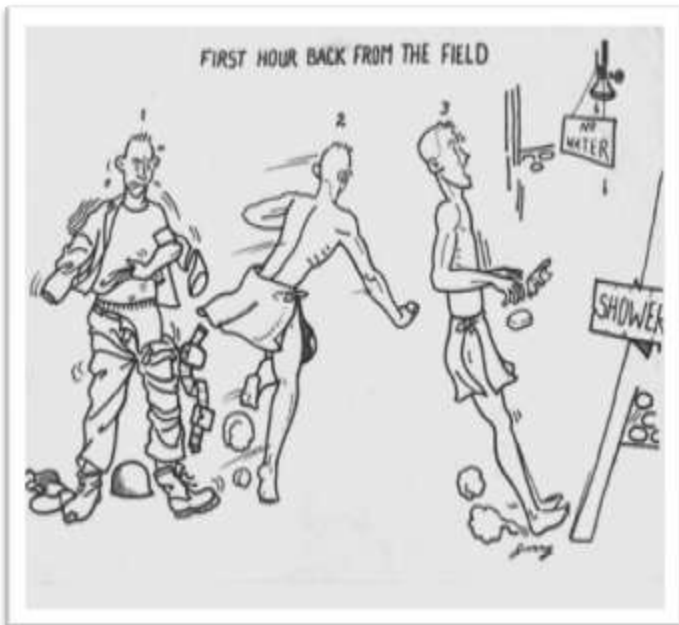
Jerry Hassler

RTO Recon/S-2/HHC/2/503d '66/'67



L-R in picture: Marshall Newsome G/T, Jerry Hassler, Harrison Hassler, Scott Wells C, T.J. Lang T/G and Evan Dietrich-Smith with Green Bay Packers in my gun store.

No Water!



By cartoonist, gun seller and RTO Jerry Hassler, 1966

Years Ago This Month

~ September ~

1965

Pleiku

1966

Operation Aurora II
Operation Toledo

1967

Operation Greeley

1968

Operation Cochise

1969 – 1971

Operation Washington Green
Operation Lightning

Sobering Statistics

These numbers were published in AMVETS' *American Veteran* magazine summer edition and caught by the watchful eye of Sgt. "Rock" Steve Vargo, C/2/503d:

1.76 mil

Number of children and youth in military families.

19,000

Children who have a parent wounded in action.

107,000

Estimated number of veterans who are homeless on any given night. Over the course of a year, approximately twice that many experience homelessness.

8%

General population that can claim veteran status today, but nearly one-fifth of the homeless population are veterans.

6,500

Estimated number of homeless female veterans.



A Nisei On Corregidor

This is more than the story of one soldier. It is a story about loyalty and the admiration of comrades. It is about the struggle for recognition of deeds performed long ago, forgotten by many and remembered by a few.

It is about the lives that were saved as a result of one man's courage.



Harry Akune, in a photo taken shortly after the war.

Harry Akune was detailed to the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team led by then Colonel George M. Jones. Even though Akune never attended jump school he volunteered to jump into Corregidor with the 503rd when they were given the mission to retake the island from the Japanese.

His exploits went unrecognized for many years before they became fully known to his comrades who then began their quest for his recognition. The 503rd collected the information they'd need and Jack Herzig wrote a letter describing the material that the members of the 503rd had been able to assimilate. As a retired Brigadier General, Jones made a request that Harry Akune be inducted into the Military Intelligence Hall of Fame. The General described Akune's actions on Corregidor and Harry is finally invited to the Ceremony honoring his service during the war.

Harry M. Akune entered the United States Army on 12 December 1942 from the Amache Relocation Camp, Colorado, where he and his family had been relocated as part of the government's action to remove 120,000 Japanese-Americans from the west coast during World War II. After graduating from the Military Intelligence Service Language School, he served as a Translator/Interpreter to the US 33d Infantry Division in British New Guinea in May 1944, and then to the US 6th Army in Hollandia, British New Guinea, as part of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service. In November, 1944 then Specialist Akune was attached to the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team to provide intelligence services for the amphibious invasion of Mindoro Island which became a vital base for our aerial war against the main Japanese forces in the Philippines on the island of Luzon.

The 503d Parachute RCT became the lead unit in retaking the fortress of Corregidor, key to Manila harbor and the site of the surrender of American and Filipino

forces in 1942, the greatest defeat in American military history. General (then Colonel) George M. Jones, commanding the American Rock Force, recognizing the valuable services that Specialist Akune could provide, personally asked him if he would volunteer in what became the most daring and dangerous airborne assault in the Pacific war. Specialist Akune replied that he already felt as though he was a member of the 503d and would be honored to continue to serve with them.

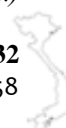
Without formal parachutist training, on 16 February 1945, Specialist Akune was among the first Americans to land among the splintered tree stumps, rubble, and enemy fire on the heavily-defended island fortress. As with most parachute operations, the initial period required every soldier to fight as infantry, and Specialist Akune joined his fellow troopers in firefights and assaults on the rapidly-reforming enemy garrison. Later he would participate as an infantryman in a number of combat patrols.

Shortly after the landing, Specialist Akune was able to extract timely and valuable intelligence from the few prisoners taken and documents he translated. This included the fact that the enemy commander had been killed just before the airborne landing, that severe damage had been done to the Japanese communication system, that the strength of the opposition was 5,000 and not the 850 previously estimated and that the nature of the enemy force included a number of highly-motivated Japanese Imperial Marines who would not hesitate to give their lives while taking ours. These findings enabled our land forces to design the most effective offensive.



Specialist Akune also discovered that there were 100 enemy motor boats packed with explosives in hidden caves around the island ready to destroy Allied shipping, thereby allowing the Navy to take timely countermeasures to avoid losses. Specialist Akune demonstrated that a human intelligence capability is essential for success in a wide variety of combat situations. The 503d After Action Report recommended that an intelligence specialist be permanently assigned to every combat operation.

(continued...)





Harry [right] and his brother [left], with friends in Boulder, CO in 1943.

Colonel Jones and his staff have stated many times that the personal bravery and truly outstanding actions of Specialist Akune allowed our forces to take rapid and effective offensive action against a larger enemy force, thereby shortening the duration of the campaign and significantly reducing the number of American casualties. Specialist Akune has enjoyed the admiration, affection and gratitude of his fellow paratroopers who consider him one of their very own.

[Sent in by Bob Wagner, WWII 503rd PRCT]

Bob's Chicken

I have been with Harry a number of times personally, and talked to him on occasion on the phone. I was present with him at Fort Huachuca when he was inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame on June 28, 1996.

He and I became friends while on Mindoro Island in the Philippines prior to our jump on Corregidor. We, along with two other troopers were assigned to establish an outpost, guarding the regimental command post of General Jones (Col. then).

I had acquired a hen from some Filipino, along with some corn. I kept the chicken tied with a long string on its foot and that hen laid me an egg every day, which I proceeded to eat raw. On most nights a single Jap plane flew over us and dropped a few anti-personal explosives of some kind.

One morning I woke up only to find that my chicken had been killed that preceding night by some shrapnel during the night. Harry and I still get a good laugh over that incident.

Harry is genuine in every aspect.

ALL THE WAY

Bob Wagner
503rd PRCT WWII



"During its entire history, only about 250 Military Intelligence professionals have been selected for membership in the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame, owing to the deliberate and thorough selection process."

Creed of the Military Intelligence Corps

*I am a Soldier first, but an intelligence professional second to none.
With pride in my heritage, but focused on the future,
Performing the first task of an Army:
To find, know, and never lose the enemy.
With a sense of urgency and of tenacity,
professional and physical fitness,
and above all, INTEGRITY, for in truth lies victory.
Always at silent war, while ready for a shooting war,
The silent warrior of the ARMY team.*



PTSD Coach Mobile App



The PTSD Coach app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur after trauma. Features include:

Reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work.

Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms
Convenient, easy-to-use skills to help you handle stress symptoms.

Direct links to support and help.

Always with you when you need it.

Free PTSD Coach download from: [iTunes](#) and now also on [Android Market](#)

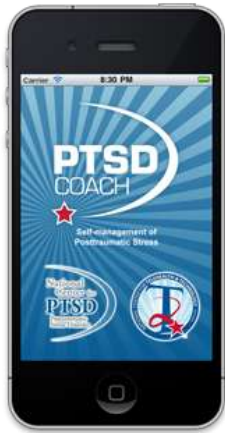
Together with professional medical treatment, PTSD Coach provides you dependable resources you can trust. If you have, or think you might have PTSD, this app is for you. Family and friends can also learn from this app. PTSD Coach was created by the VA's National Center for PTSD and the [DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology](#).

NOTE: PTSD is a serious mental health condition that often requires professional evaluation and treatment. PTSD Coach is not intended to replace needed professional care. The questionnaire used in PTSD Coach, the PTSD Checklist (PCL), is a reliable and valid self-report measure used across VA, DoD, and in the community, but it is not intended to replace professional evaluation.

Providing you with facts and self-help skills based on research.

Privacy and Security

Any data created by the user of this app are only as secure as the phone/device itself. Use the security features on your device if you are concerned about the privacy of your information. Users are free to share data, but as the self-



monitoring data belong to each user, HIPAA concerns do not apply while the data is stored or shared. If the user were to transmit or share data with a health care provider, the provider must then comply with HIPAA rules.

Watch for other additions:

PTSD Coach for Android now available on [Android Market](#)

PTSD Family Coach (coming soon)

Contact us for more information or with comments: ncptsd@va.gov

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]

NATIONAL POW/MIA FORMAL RETREAT CEREMONY



To be held at LUKE AFB
Near Phoenix, AZ

The ceremony will be held on Wednesday, September 28, 2011 at 1630 hours. It will be held at the flag pole parade circle which is in front of the Wing Headquarters Building #452. There will be refreshments in the HQ building as usual before and after the ceremony, with bottles of water being passed out during the ceremony (if it is hot out). **PLAN NOW TO BE THERE.**

EACH Post is to compile a list of their own members and guests, in ALPHABETICAL ORDER, with FIRST AND LAST NAMES, - not Mr. & Mrs. If you are retired or have military I.D. you do not have to pre-register.

There will be a "MISSING MAN FLY OVER". The final deadline to submit names is Wednesday, September 21, 2011.

EACH POST MUST E/MAIL their list to the Luke Air Force Protocol at 56fw.ccp@luke.af.mil - This is so that Base Security can check you in with ease. PLEASE USE THE SOUTH GATE ON LITCHFIELD ROAD.

Please plan to attend and let them know "WE DID NOT FORGET".

Bob Madden
bob5992@cox.net



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT FOR TWO BUDDIES

In a nutshell, we lost two guys in a 30 man L shaped ambush one evening as we sent out clover leaves before nightfall. Victor Charles wasn't happy with us for screwing with him over the weeks prior. We were putting a dent in his plans. He decided to let us know we didn't rule the valley all the time.

They were John Chavarria, 18 years old, and Edmund Petrechko, 19 years old, both died 4 Mar 70.

They died in the An Do Valley (our AO), north of LZ North English, in the village of Phu Nong. Just to our north, on the other side of the mountain, was Quang Nhai province and the demarcation line for I Corps - II Corps. But we were located in the An Do Valley, which is Binh Dinh province.



Jerry Sopko
doing what's right

John Marez Chavarria

Corporal
D CO, 4TH BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD ABN
BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Lamar, Colorado
April 01, 1951 to March 04, 1970
JOHN M CHAVARRIA is on the Wall at Panel
13W Line 083

At any rate, a four man team had two dead, one badly wounded, and another who was a basket case after the experience. I remember this well because the severely wounded man got his Sgt. stripes in the afternoon mail and was given my patrol to take out that evening. So the details are burned in my brain.

Getting to the point, I just looked up the two KIAs on the Virtual Wall, and find that they are listed as dying in Quang Nhai province. That was the domain of the Americal Division, and we were located to the south of them in Binh Dinh Province. I don't think the Herd ever operated in Quang Nhai, and I'm certain we weren't in Quang Nhai! We were the northern most company of the 173d, but we were in Binh Dinh Province.

When I wrote to the Virtual Wall people to tell them, they said they are reluctant to change the information based on 41 year-old recollections of a person from that time and place. Oh well, can't fight city hall.

Edmund A. Petrechko, Jr

Corporal
C CO, 4TH BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD ABN
BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Richmond, Missouri
November 23, 1950 to March 04, 1970
EDMUND A PETRECHKO Jr is on the Wall at
Panel 13W Line 082

In addition to getting the Province wrong, they also had Petrechko as being a member of C Co, 4th of the 503rd. He was D Co., just like John Chavarria.

I asked Bob Wolfgang (C/4/503) too, and he just advised it is his area of responsibility. He suggested that I pursue a course of action, and Roy Scott (3/319th and 173d Association president) is checking into help from Legislators.

I know Virtual Wall feels much more confident about the Army's records as their source, but I'm betting some yahoo looked on a map and saw the An Do as so close to Quang Nhai that they just assumed . . . because maybe their line was drawn in crooked or something. On the other hand, I was with First Platoon when it happened, and I think I know where I was! The Platoon Leader and three other NCOs will attest to the facts as I presented them. In fact, another NCO from 3rd platoon -- who had to rescue them since Charles had us pinned down in our perimeter for about 10 minutes -- was with the rescue squad and can also verify where they died.

I'm looking for some avenues to see how we might correct the record of their deaths. It seems their sacrifice should at least be noted properly for posterity.

Jerry Sopko
D/4/503d



Lest we forget



Tunnels in Nam 1966

By A.B. Garcia
HHC/2/503d



A.B. (Aussino) Garcia, HHC/4.2 2/503d. The singing mortarman entertaining High School students in Vietnam.
Girl: "What does Guantanamo mean?"

We were on some operation prior to "Operation Silver City" with the Brigade when we came upon some tunnels enroute to our most famous day that year on March 16th. One of our Sergeants asked the troops if we would like to go and have a look in them. Like an idiot, I volunteered. In the Army, they tell you NEVER volunteer, but I didn't heed the advice and took on the task.

Always an adventurer I and two others in the "Cherry" (a new guy replacing wounded troopers) Wayne English a Georgian fella and my other brother in Truman Ray Thomas a Texan, went in. It was pitch black so we needed flash lights (torches) and .45 caliber pistols and some extra ammo if required. We also carried extra batteries. People often ask me when I relate this story how dark it was. I tell them that close their eyes hold your hands to them and that's exactly how pitch black.

In we went, me leading. It was a very complex tunnel system with bamboo poles hollowed out stuck into the ground protruding in the tunnels with chunks cut out aerating the tunnels. It was rather cool and plenty of ventilation. We crawled on our stomachs and elbows, and at times the tunnels would become extremely tight and it took some effort to contort our bodies to get through some sections. I held the torch in my left hand as I'm right-handed, holding the pistol with a bullet in

the breech, but not cocked. I don't recall being scared, and I felt that nothing would happen as I carried this thought throughout my tour there; for I thought that if there was a bullet/bullets, or piece of metal with my name on it, so be it. My parents had 5 other siblings that would take up the slack and it was part and parcel of being a Grunt.

The tunnels were long and at times would come to an abrupt end. There would be a concrete cap either on the floor or on the roof. After having a chat with my two tunnel brothers, we decided that I would remove the cap slowly. God only knows what was on the other side of those caps. Slowly removing the caps, there was a gap of about 2-3 feet space. There was no sound other than our breathing. I thought that I would flash the torch around trying to draw fire which never came. My pistol would be cocked at this stage and ready for whatever was about to happen. We either crawled up or dropped down to the next level. We'd crawl again seemed like long periods gasping for breath and steadily forward in these parts of the complex.

At one point, I saw a "Y" at the tunnel with a set of eyes which just absolutely scared the living shit out of me. I never expected to see anything like this. I turned off the torch, and mentioned to my brothers on what I'd seen. On saying this, something whizzed past my head and ears. The terror I felt here was indescribable to relate my absolute fear of not knowing what it was. At first I thought it was a cat as the eyes reflected like one. In fact, it had to be a bat. We continued after this scare and came upon another end. Again the same scenario of removing the concrete cap and continuing. More hollowed out bamboo with chunks cut out.



Sky Soldiers return to the Tunnels of Cu Chi in 2001.
L-R: Craig Ford C/1/503, A.B. Garcia HHC/2/503 and Mike Sturges A/2/503 in Ch Chi tunnel 2001.

(continued....)





Dale Olson A/2/503d, Tunnel Rat in 2001, Chu Chi.

After about a couple of hours, we surfaced with nothing sighted. At night here we held out listening posts again as we did every night in the jungles. These were 3 man positions under a hoochie with one stick to our right and one to the left so as not to fire on our trooper's positions to either side in case we got attacked. The nights were as cold and we shivered all night as we got rained on and had no extra clothing other than maybe dry socks. The nights in Nam were cold and the days extremely sweltering.



Steve Haber C/2/503d, in the Cu Chi tunnels 2001.

The listening posts had to be outside our perimeter to safeguard from enemies attacks. The shifts were two hours on guard, and four off. This was so hard as we were exhausted at the end of the day's operations. It was so hard trying to stay awake for that time. I used to bite on my tongue, pinch myself and inflict pain to stay awake.

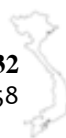
The next morning after breakfast, in we went again. Same thing on our bellies and elbows. On the third day of crawling them, I came upon a rifle with the trigger guard stuck into the mud floor. I motioned to English and Thomas of my find. They warned me not to touch it as it might be booby trapped. I checked it out thoroughly and on the side of the tunnel, I could see a small mud ridge with some string visible. At the end of this string on the roof of the tunnel was a fragmentation grenade with the pin three quarters of the way pulled out. It was an old WWII frag grenade. Like a pineapple type. I got my bayonet from my side pocket of my jungle fatigues and cut the string.

English, Thomas and I decided to call it quits at this point. We crawled out with the rifle which was a sniper rifle CHICOM 7.62 mm bolt action. It had a bayonet affixed onto the barrel which was easily extended for hand to hand combat whereas our bayonets had to be taken out of our scabbards and affixed onto the barrels of our M-16's for this purpose.

The rifle was handed in with my name on it for intelligence to clear it so as I could claim it as a war trophy after the war. I can't remember at what point it was returned back to me either at the end of my tour?? This rifle today sits in the Vietnam Veterans Museum in Cowes/Phillip Island, Australia on display for all to see with an explanation as to how it was obtained.



The Aussino and Smitty in Saigon ready to return to the World after their 2001 reinvasion of Vietnam.



A Poignant Note

An email sent to Mike "Mac" McMillan, 4/503, and other troopers from their Vietnam vet buddy Jerry Hassler. Jerry speaks for us all.

~ 3 Musketeers ~

Mac,

There's always a special place for those who never got to live out their lives like the rest of us... in our hearts and memories. As long as we, as well as their families, still remember, they live on, forever in their youth while the rest of us suffer the maladies of old age.



We remember their faces, some of us their names, and the lucky ones of us, something of their lives other than as a fellow comrade-in-arms. More than anything, we can look back and know the support was always there. If Puff, artillery, Phantoms, rescue, Casper, etc. was needed, seldom was there any hesitation to rush to our assistance in a firefight.

All for one and one for all, we were all Musketeers! Such a bond is why we choose to remember as we do.

Jerry Hassler
Recon/S-2/HHC/2/503d

~ 3 Musketeers ~



Jack Leide Charlie Company with Andy Russell & Dale Olson both Alpha Company at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL in '06.

~ 3 Mouseketteers ~



Annette Funicello,
the perpetual cutie.

Forever let us hold our banner high!



Cheryl Holdridge
1944-2009

See you real soon....



2nd Tour for Airborne Ranger



On July 26, 2009, Major Ed Privette, former Communications Officer and Commander of Headquarters Company 2/503d in 1967, and Dak To veteran, pins his original 1952 jump wings on his grandson, 2LT Nick Privette, during jump school graduation ceremonies at Fort Benning, GA. Nick was graduated West Point in 2008.

Capt. Nick Privette left on a C-17 on August 23rd with the 2d Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment for Afghanistan and his second tour in the Sand. Nick is the grandson of Majors Ed and Mary Privette, both Vietnam vets. Ed was HHC CO with the 2/503d.

In Ed's words, "On Sunday 'Cap' Gary Prisk (2/503d) and his wife Linda invited Nick and his fiancée Kristina to dinner at a fine riverfront restaurant in the Ft. Lewis area. Kristina knows little about the life of a Ranger's wife, especially one deployed in Afghanistan. Linda, with well chosen words and experiences from her past,

spent several hours easing the anxiety Kristina was experiencing.

Now there's a guy and his wife willing to go the extra mile for a young couple he and Linda had never met to ease the pain of their last night together in the U.S.

We don't use the title the original six of us used much anymore, 'The Amigos', but Cap Gary and his wife are true Amigos. Mary and I are thankful we have friends like ALL of you in this group and a very special thanks to Gary and Linda Prisk for going above and beyond 'The Extra Mile'!"

Good luck Nick!

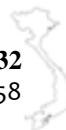


The Teenage Captain, Company Commander Gary Prisk, sitting after having his uniform torn-up and being hog-tied by his men in preparation for his Liberty Flight for R&R. The Cap called his men "The Hill People".

NATIONAL VETERANS SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC

Sept. 18 – 23, 2011, San Diego, California

VA's newest national program, the Summer Sports Clinic promotes rehabilitation of body and spirit by teaching summer sporting activities to Veterans with significant physical or psychological impairments. The clinic offers such sports a surfing, sailing, kayaking, track and field, and cycling to Veterans who are newly injured from amputations, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and other neurological disorders, all benefitting from the therapeutic environment offered at the Clinic. Each year, the events offered will vary, allowing greater exposure to new adaptive sports and recreational activities. For information or to request an application please contact Tristan Heaton (858) 642-6426.



SOUND OFF!

The Newsletter of
VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.

"Veterans standing up for each other"



Update on Status of Our Class Action Lawsuit

15 August 2011, Bulletin #48: As we have reported to you before, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on our case on 10 May 2011. The majority of the three-judge panel (Circuit Judges Hug & Reinhardt) found that veterans' constitutional rights were being violated by the manner in which the VA's had implemented their policies, and by how those policies were being executed. FYI here is the "Conclusion" statement from that ruling:

"The United States Constitution confers upon veterans and their surviving relatives a right to the effective provision of mental health care and to the just and timely adjudication of their claims for health care and service-connected death and disability benefits. Although the terms of the Administrative Procedure Act preclude Veterans from obtaining relief in our court for their statutory claims, their entitlements to the provision of health care and to veterans' benefits are property interests protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fifth amendment. The deprivation of those property interests by delaying their provision, without justification and without any procedure to expedite, violates veterans' constitutional rights.

Because neither Congress nor the Executive has corrected the behavior that yields these constitutional violations, the courts must provide the plaintiffs with a remedy. We therefore remand this case to the district court with the instruction that, unless the parties resolve this dispute first, it enter an order consistent with this opinion."

Chief Judge Kozinski wrote a lengthy dissent from that position, essentially agreeing with the VA that the courts had no business in the game. Since that time the VA has petitioned the court to have the case returned to the Ninth Circuit for an *en banc* hearing, raising entirely new objections previously unmentioned. In the Ninth Circuit an *en banc* panel consists of 11 of the 29 judges. The VA has no automatic right to an *en banc* hearing; their request must be ruled upon by the court. Our counsel has subsequently filed for a ruling to deny the VA's request.

Our counsel has provided us with a layman's interpretation of the current situation which we would like to share with all of you. Please pass it on to any of your correspondents who might have interest in this case, pro or con:

"On August 9, **Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth** filed their response to VA's petition for rehearing. As explained in the response filed yesterday, VA's petition raised four legal arguments as to

why the case should be reheard, but VA did not even raise three of those arguments in the original appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This is particularly interesting because in raising the arguments, VA's petition described these issues as "*questions of exceptional importance.*" Yet, they were not so important that VA felt it necessary to raise these issues in the original appeal.

The three new issues are:

- 1) VA now claims that veteran applicants do not have a constitutionally protected property interest in mental health care or disability compensation.
- 2) VA now claims that it enjoys sovereign immunity, and therefore courts cannot review its unconstitutional actions.
- 3) VA now claims that VCS and VUFT do not have standing to pursue their constitutional claims.

In addition to these new issues, VA also claims that the Veterans Judicial Review Act strips the court of any jurisdiction to hear these constitutional claims. VA's position - if correct - would have far-reaching implications for veterans. It would mean that veterans have fewer constitutional rights than any other applicants for benefits. And it would mean that veterans have no recourse in Article III federal courts to challenge unconstitutional actions of VA.

In response, VCS and VUFT noted:

- 1) That the federal courts - under the Administrative Procedure Act and otherwise - are open to provide remedies for constitutional violations by federal agencies and federal officials;
- 2) That the Veterans Judicial Review Act does not prevent the district court from hearing these constitutional challenges;
- 3) That VCS and VUFT have standing to bring these claims on behalf of themselves (as organizations) AND on behalf of their members; and
- 4) That veterans have a constitutionally protected property interest in timely medical care and timely resolution of their appeals from service-connected death and disability compensation decisions, and that the Ninth Circuit panel was correct in holding that the egregious delays violated veterans' constitutional right to due process.

We believe that the Ninth Circuit panel correctly resolved all of these issues, and that rehearing is not necessary. We will continue to keep you informed as to the progress in the case.

Sanford (Sandy) Cook
Vice Chair, Veterans United For Truth, Inc.
www.vuft.org, scook@vuft.org

And if you are so inclined, please help us in this effort
through a contribution:
<http://www.vuft.org/donate.html>



**A nice note from Vietnam vet
Sandy Cook of *Veteran's United
for Truth*:**



You may use anything you wish out of our newsletter or which we have on our site. Thanks for the offer.

We would love to have some of your members join us. As you know, we are nonpolitical, have members of every political stripe, and have only one goal in mind and that is to get the VA to perform at least up to the level that they claim to do.

There are no dues and we don't have any advertising, so there is no penalty for belonging. We would welcome not only your dissemination of our info, but an appeal to all of those who are devoted to making the VA perform to join us in the fight.

As you know, the more names the more likely it is that someone will listen (we already have the VA's attention and the courts).

Thanks for the offer, and have at it.

We can always count on the airborne!

Sanford (Sandy) Cook
RVN '68-'69

**NO DEROS ALPHA RTO'S
TAKING 5**



L-R: Bob Hamilton, Richard Dagale, Dan Fritzman 2nd Platoon, A/2/503d, Kontum 1971

(Photo from Dan Fritzman)



“My troops may fail to take a position, but they are never driven from one!”

- General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson

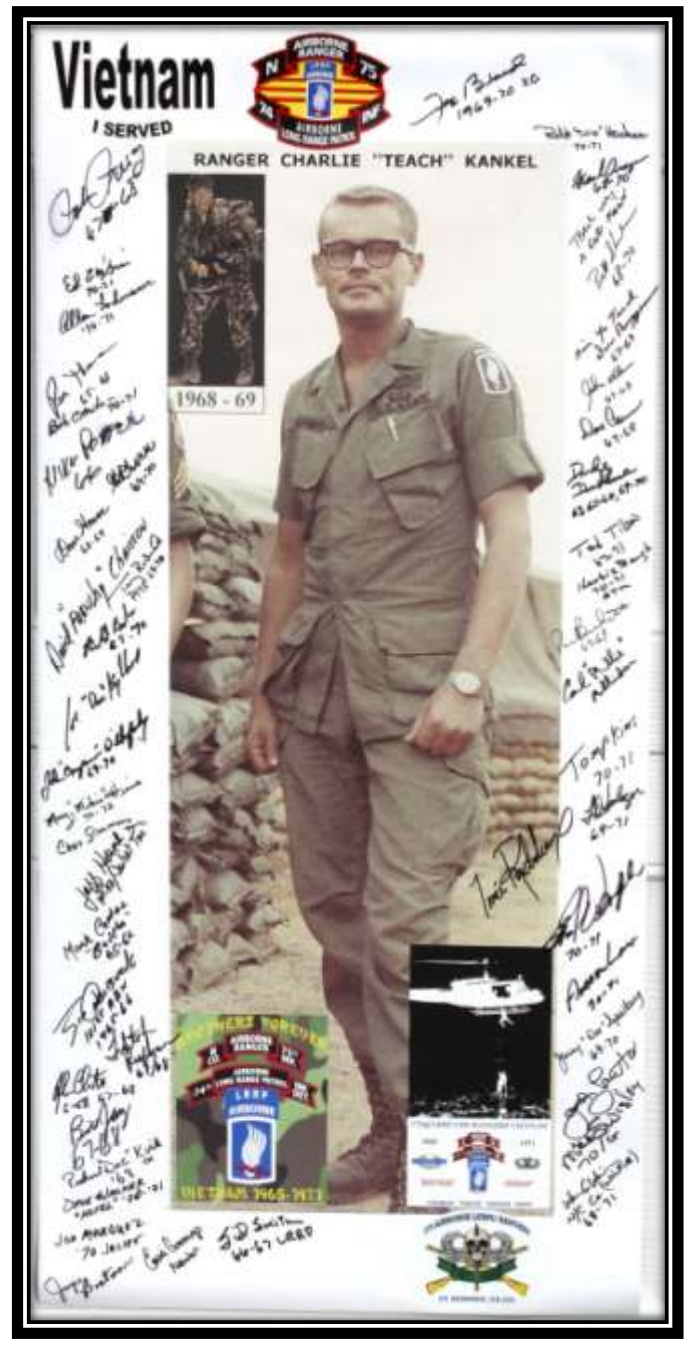
REMEMBERING A RANGER

To all members, friends of the Company -
Lurps/Rangers 173rd Airborne Brigade:

At the 2011 Ranger/Lurp Reunion, members of the 173d Airborne Brigade signed a vinyl poster (18"x 45") in remembrance of Charlie "Teach" Kankel. Charlie passed away in 2010 after a long battle with cancer.

The poster was sent to his nephew, Karl Kankel.

Robt "Twin" Henriksen
75th Rangers



Carl F. Shefferd

Forever a 4/503rd Sky Soldier

August 20, 1947 ~ August 15, 2011



Carl F. Shefferd, age 63 of Belleville, Michigan, passed away on Monday, August 15, 2011 at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor, MI. He was born in Denver, Colorado on August 20, 1947.

Mr. Shefferd graduated from West High School, Colorado. He proudly served his country in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam conflict. He was a member of the Patriot Guard, Combat Veterans and Paratroopers. He retired from General Motors Powertrain plant after nearly 30 years of loyal service and was a member of the Local #735. He loved hunting, fishing, and most of all, riding motorcycles. He organized many fundraiser rides to benefit local veterans. He also enjoyed making care packages to send to the troops overseas.

Carl is survived by 3 daughters; Ellaine Hammontre of Phoenix, Arizona, Sara Shefferd of Avondale, Arizona, and Stacy Shefferd of Belleville, MI, 3 grandchildren, and also a sister, Linda (Jim) VanHeesch, of Denver, Colorado.

He was interred at Great Lakes National Cemetery, Holly, MI, with full military honors. Memorial contributions in his honor, may be made to any Veterans organization, and would be appreciated.

Geronimo Carl!

A VETERAN'S CREED

As a veteran, I have served with the finest in peacetime and war, wherever the need.

As a veteran I will stand tall and proud to honor the fallen, it's a veteran's creed.

I will honor the living, those who survived a war-torn hell not of their own making; who fought for freedom whatever the cost, when their hearts were silently breaking.

I will shake the hand of an old soldier and will look deep into his eyes to see the pride that he feels to be remembered for his part in the ongoing fight for liberty.

As the early morning sun rises, I will greet another day and be thankful for my life.

At the setting of the sun, I will salute the flag that waves freely, far from strife.

**Countrymom
7/18/07**

VA Launches New Prevention Initiative to Serve 22,000 Veteran Families at Risk of Homelessness

Nearly \$60 Million in Homeless Prevention Grants Awarded Nationwide

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the award of nearly \$60 million in homeless prevention grants that will serve approximately 22,000 homeless and at-risk Veteran families as part of the new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. This initial \$60 million award will serve Veteran families at 85 non-profit community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia under VA's new homeless prevention initiative.

"This new homeless prevention program will provide additional comprehensive support to Veterans who have served honorably, and now find themselves in a downward spiral toward despair and homelessness," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. *"This program expands our capacity to act before a Veteran becomes homeless and to target the problem of family homelessness. These grants would not have been possible without the extraordinary partnerships forged with community organizers who are firmly committed to making a positive difference in lives of Veterans and their families."*



From the Archives

Aussie's to Dedicate Commemorative Flag

The Aussies that served with The Brigade during the first year of the Brigade's seven years in Vietnam are soon to receive The Meritorious Unit Citation in belated recognition of their service. They also are about to pay homage to their fallen and those of The 173d Airborne Brigade.

An Australian National Flag that was carried during the Australian Welcome Home Parade of 1987 will soon be adorned with the names of Australian Soldiers who gave their lives in the service of their country.

The Flag, when dedicated, will then be carried by a young Australian girl named Kylie Watkins (whose family has donated the cost of the engravings to the Aussies), at the head of 1RAR on ANZAC DAY, 1991.

Beneath the plates bearing the names of the Australians who died while serving as members of The First Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment through two tours of duty in Vietnam will be a plate that bears this inscription --

**IN MEMORY OF 1588 SKY SOLDIERS
OF THE 173rd AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
UNITED STATES ARMY
WHO WERE KILLED IN ACTION
1965 – 1971**

[This report originally appeared in the Winter 1991,
Vo. 5, No. 4 edition of *Sky Soldier*]

173d/503rd Hologram Card



Paratrooper extraordinaire Chuck Breit, 503rd PRCT WWII, gave us 100 of these hologram cards which switch between the patches of the two units. There are about 90 remaining and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Send your name and addresses to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and it will be mailed to you.

Thanks Chuck!!



ATTITUDE

Being Airborne means never having to miss an opportunity to remind people that you're better than they are.

HOOKING UP!

Aloha from Hawaii

In the next newsletter, I would like to ask if I can locate some of my friends who served with me in Nam. I served with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 2/503rd Inf. from February '68 to May '68, mostly in LZ English. Also looking to find the guys that got Medivac'd with me -- never found any of them. I was the only guy in Company C who hailed from Hawaii.

Rogelio M. Ancheta
C/2/503d
beccasado@gmail.com

Looking for 2/503 Buddies?

Thanks to Pete Klausner, A/4/503d and 173d Airborne Brigade Association membership chairman, the email list maintained here of 2/503d troopers has grown to nearly 1500 names, representing all companies of our battalion during all years in Vietnam.

If you are looking to hook-up with a buddy, send his name and 2/503d Company to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and if he's on the list we'll forward your name and email address to him asking him to contact you.



TRYING TO FIND LOST BROTHERS

A few weeks before my DEROS (2/14/68), I decided I wanted an affecting, tangible piece of memorabilia to accompany back to the World. I chose a readily available steel pot camouflage cover as my palette for remembrances. Though our ranks had been decimated of seasoned vets lost during various encounters in Dak To the months previous, there remained a unique scrap of survivors, and even a handful FNGs I wanted to always remember.



I'd all but forgotten about this keepsake, when in 2007 my late mother asked if I still wanted "*Some odd Viet Nam cloth material*" which had been stored in her basement soon after I'd returned stateside. Upon viewing this piece of history, a rush of emotions engulfed my every mental being. Some signatories I recognized immediately---Joe Gray and Les Fuller were fellow Alpha alum. John "Skeezix" Carter was not only an old head with 2nd Batt's Bravo and Delta Companies, but a close and dear childhood friend who was raised less than a block from me in our hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the remaining names I'd long since forgotten, and could make no memorable connection.

Below I've listed the aforementioned lost souls. A few included their hometown or just their state. Several chose to use nicknames. A couple thought a last name was sufficient. I've managed to reconnect and stay in touch with several over the recent decade, but would relish updates on the others. If anyone knows of their whereabouts, please have them contact me, if they so choose.

Eugene Lucas-Daytona Beach, FL
Howard Lewis-Washington, DC
Don Salter-FL
Father Gilly
E.J. Kehoe-Bronx, NY
Eddie Perkins-OK
Craddock-Baltimore, MD
William Trussell-3 Romeo
Ted Spencer-CT
Russell "Newman" Hodges
Al Jackson-Hattiesburg, MS
Paul Graff-Chicago, IL
Bill Jarvis-NY
Diggs-Memphis, TN
Mike R. Heim-Jacksonville, FL
Bill Campbell-Lexington, KY
Ben Blackwell-Baltimore, MD
SSG. Ellis-Fayetteville, NC
Martin Berman-CT
Herman Williams-Chicago, IL
W.W. Legros-HI
Jerry Bryant Jr.-"The Booby"
George Worthy
Pig Pen Spellane-MA
Eddie A. Gonzalez-Jersey City, NJ
Cornelius Sykes
Ricky Murphy-TX
Edward Bentz
Willie Freeman-Lyons, GA
Jocko-Philadelphia, PA
"Don(Dutch) Schiesl-WA
Jim Batchelor-NJ
Sylvester Copeland
Matt Harrison
Carrol G. Parker-Delta Co.
Laffaron Bonner-Chattanooga, TN
Richard A. Banks-Pensacola, FL
James Smith-St. Louis, MO
Jon "Short"-PA
James D. Stacy
Robert L. Andrews-Laredo, TX
James E. Jones
James Richard Bailey-IL
Anthony Romano-NYC
DiGregorio

Wambi Cook

A/2/503d

wambicook@aol.com

626-664-0219



2/503d Vietnam Vet Sky Soldier of the Year 2011



Presented to honoree

You'll recall Ken Smith was named our 2/503d Vietnam Vet Sky Soldier of the Year for 2010. Between now and December 1st, send in a one-page write-up to rto173d@cfl.rr.com of whom you would like to nominate for this honor for 2011. A selection committee of three 2/503 officers and three enlisted men from different years will review all nominations and select the honoree on behalf of us all. The editor of this newsletter will only have a vote in the event of a tie.

No more 20-year rule? DOD panel calls for radical retirement overhaul

Stars and Stripes

A sweeping new plan to overhaul the Pentagon's retirement system would give some benefits to all troops and phase out the 20-year



cliff vesting system that has defined military careers for generations, the *Military Times* newspapers reported.

The plan calls for a corporate-style benefits program that would contribute money to troops' retirement savings account rather than the promise of a future monthly pension, according to a new proposal from an influential Pentagon advisory board.

The move would save the Pentagon money -- at a time when it's being asked to cut at least \$400 billion -- and benefit troops who leave with less than 20 years of service.

The yearly contributions might amount to about 16.5 percent of a member's annual pay and would be deposited into a mandatory version of the Thrift Savings Plan, the military's existing 401(k)-style account that now does not include government matching contributions, according to the *Times*.

Proponents said the plan would allow more flexibility for servicemembers, who could decide how they want to invest their retirement savings, and for the military, which would be allowed to offer higher contributions to troops who deploy frequently or take hardship assignments.

The *Military Times* has more on the proposed overhaul, including a summary of how servicemembers would be affected, depending on their length of service.

[Sent in by Harry Cleland, HHC/B/2/503d]



MASSACHUSETTS VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

A SUBTLE MESSAGE?

"I think you 2nd Bat guys used these!!!"

Peter

Note: We're not sure which Peter sent in this note and photo, but we do know he's a Sky Soldier, perhaps of 4th Bat fame. He clearly has us confused with the Marines.



The PLACE OF WORDS consists of an area where the words of veterans are etched in stone for all to see and contemplate. The writings in the PLACE OF WORDS are the text from letters written home by 13 Massachusetts servicemen who died in Vietnam. For veterans, Gold Star family members, and the citizens, this space is a place of knowledge, reflection, and understanding for those who gave their life for freedom.

Don Ball

HHC/2/503d

Member Board of Directors

MA Memorial

<http://web.me.com/traj/MVVM/Welcome.html>

Tobacco Smoke Enema (1750s-1810s)

The tobacco enema was used to infuse tobacco smoke into a patient's rectum for various medical purposes, primarily the resuscitation of drown victims. A rectal tube inserted into the anus was connected to a fumigator and bellow that forced the smoke towards the rectum. The warmth of the smoke was thought to promote respiration, but doubts about the credibility of tobacco enemas led to the popular phrase "*blow smoke up one's ass.*"



Inscription on plane:
"One weekend a month MY ASS!"



"In the absence of orders, go find something and kill it."

- Field Marshall Erwin Rommel



173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)

MIDWEST CHAPTER XVII

Brothers of the Herd, members of Chapter 17, as your fearless leaders myself, Dave Carmon and Roy Scott wish to extend our gratitude to each of you for your excellent response to the Raffle Drive. Your contributions assist us at maintaining the Chapter.

Jim Haynes is doing a knock-out job at receiving and recording every mail-in. Our own Skip Kniley is tireless with the internet Bulletin Board, posting every name of those members who send in their Raffle. Our members are great and the Chapter thanks everyone of you.

We thank the wives, too, for putting up with us. The Chapter is a veterans' thing by which all others are outsiders looking in. Only veterans understand the emotion and the need for that brotherhood. The wives might not admit it but, sometimes, they have got to be bored out of their heads. But they're good troopers and they stand by their man, and for this we thank them.

We have over a month before the winning drawing at wild and wacky Kokomo. For you guys forgetting or sitting on the raffle ticket let's get off your butt and get it in. Remember that for \$20 you get five chances to win \$500. But more importantly, everything we collect beyond that \$500 goes into the Chapter ... your Chapter!

With his bad back Jim Haynes is checking his mail every day, waiting for more members to respond. Skip too is faithfully seated at his internet, waiting for more names to add to the Raffle on the Bulletin Board. There is a place on the Bulletin Board waiting for your name.

If you need tickets contact Jim Haynes at (614) 746-5605, or just send him the \$20 and Jim will write you up and drop your winning stub in the kitty. AIRBORNE!



WHODAT 2/503d TROOPER?



Gotta be the early years, he's still wearing that white patch in the boonies, the one which says, "Aim here".

Marking the Purple Heart's 229th Birthday



The DAV is marking the Purple Heart's 229th anniversary by asking those of you who rate the historic medal to tell your story.

There are nearly 2 million Purple Heart recipients, each with his or her own story. We want to hear or read yours. Use your web cam or video camera to tell how you earned your Purple Heart and what it means to you now. If you don't have video capabilities, write your story. But Facebook limits posts to 1,000 characters. If you opt for the written version, please post a photo of yourself – maybe from your medal presentation or of you with your Purple Heart now. For details visit:
<http://www.dav.org/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=447>



The Best & Worst Vietnam War Movies of All Time

Last month we asked you to rank the Top 3 best Vietnam war movies, and the one worst Vietnam war movie of all time. Here are the results of this very scientific study:

Best Vietnam War Movie of all time:

-----	Votes Received
We Were Soldiers	2

Second Best:

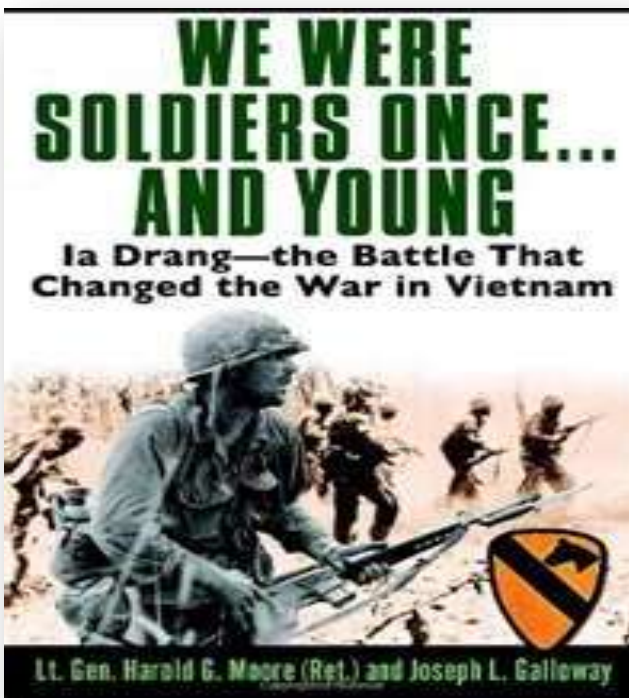
84 Charlie MoPic	1
Bat 21	1

Third Best:

Hamburger Hill	1
The Green Berets	1

Worst Vietnam War Movie of all time:

-----	Votes Received
The Green Berets	1
Apocalypse Now	1
Born on the Fourth of July	1



Given the overwhelming response we received to this survey, there will be no more movie surveys taken in this lifetime. Ed

A Reply (with dialogue) to the Survey

As for Nam war movies, no list is complete without Rambo's *First Blood* and *First Blood Part 2*. Sly pays great respect to us all in both movies.

FIRST BLOOD

Trautman: *Company leader to identify Baker Team-Rambo, Messner, Ortega, Coletta, Jurgensen, Berry, Krakauer. Confirm! This is Colonel Trautman.*

Rambo: *They're all gone sir.*

Trautman: *Not Berry, he made it.*

Rambo: *Berry's gone too Sir. Got himself killed in 'Nam. Didn't even know it. Cancer ate him down to the bone.*

FIRST BLOOD PART 2:

Rambo: *Sir. Do we get to win this time?*

Trautman: *The war, the whole conflict may have been wrong. Damn it, don't hate your country for it.*

Rambo: *Hate? I'd die for it.*

Trautman: *Then what is it you want?*

Rambo: *I want what they (POW's Rambo brought out) want, and every other guy who came over here and spilled his guts and gave everything he had, wants! For our country to love us as much as we love it! That's what I want!*

AIRBORNE!



Note: Regrettably, we misplaced the name of the trooper who sent this in. With apologies.



More on The Battle of The Slopes

~ The K-9 and Memories ~

One story of the K-9 that was on point in the Slope.

They pulled wounded up the trail and Weapons Platoon was pulled back to cut a Dust Off area. I was on ambush with the squad up the trail above the camp. We came into the Bunker system that was used by most of the company but 2nd and 3rd Platoon were ahead in the line of march. They ran into the ambush.

I was guarding the trail as it was secured for extraction of the wounded when a reported curl maneuver by the NVA was reported. That is why we went wide not down the secure trail.

While down there, the K-9 Handler was dead. The German Shepherd was pulled up the trail, but I saw him come down from breaking his rope or whatever to be with his Handler. I saw him lose flesh off his hind quarter and take another bullet about 25 feet away from me. Such loyalty often brings tears to me when I think of that dog. I wish I could have seen the Snipers that must have been in the trees somewhere down slope.

I was there not quite one year and did inter-theater transfer to Thailand. Yeah, I lost my cherry on the Slopes. I was on the hill near where C company caught that misplaced bomb around Thanksgiving. I captured a NVA Chu Hoi and took him to the Captain of A Company on that Fire Support base that we were at. Half the sky turned black with the B-52 sortie that day that was called in to the valley that separated Cambodia and Vietnam. I miss Chaplain Walters who was humping with C Company that day.

I was Company A, 1st Platoon picking up my CIB and Purple Heart in the Battle of the Slopes. I have read some history, but I have not been able to add my story. I was the last to leave the area alive holding my ground for three hours after being wounded. I was next to the Lieutenant about arms' reach when he took a bullet into the right side of his helmet that blew off and bone was sticking out the top of his head. He continued to breath for two or three minutes. The RTO was on his left side (me on the right) took a bullet through the radio. He said *second f***ing time* before he died.

I double fed my M-16, grabbed a dead guy's to my right. Fired on movement until I had eight bullets left. Two Blacks went up the hill and I looked around seeing the bodies and wondered what I was defending there. I then followed up the way we came down. We regrouped up the slope a little ways to defend and assess the

situation. I did hear a few shots go off down there adding insult to the already dead is my opinion. All of that during about three hours that I was there before disengaging with eight bullets left in my magazine.

On the way down I followed some of my platoon members going but was not ordered to do that, I said a prayer mid way. *Heavenly Father if ever I needed you now is the time. Please stand by me in Jesus' name Amen.* A voice said from above; *"You'll be hit"*. That was a calm matter of fact voice that came from above to my left side, I looked up and just shook my head in wonder.

We yelled *Rawhide*, the code that we were near and perhaps making noise. Then at the perimeter I squatted down to see where the guys were setting up in defense. I was shot and it shattered the suspender belt buckle and knocked me on my backside. I said *"I'm hit"*. The Lieutenant came back several feet to look at my chest and said, as we are trained, *"You are OK"*. I bought in to that and took my position next to him and passed out ammunition to several other Sky Soldiers who asked about ammo. We threw smoke since an air strike was expected. There was one Vietnamese Pilot who flew by in a Prop job and I could see him and could have hit him with a stones' throw. He looked like a Kamikaze Pilot of a WWII movie. Airborne,

Sidney Clouston
A/2/503d

~ A Chargin' Charlie's Perspective ~

I have read with great interest the recent article on the Battle of the Slopes and the comments from various Sky Soldiers. I thought my perspective might be of interest.

On June 22, 1967, I was a brand new platoon leader in Charley Company, 2/503d (I had been in country about 2 weeks) and was on my first combat operation. We (Charley Company) had laagered the night before on a ridgeline a kilometer or two away from Alpha Company; when we sent out our clearing patrol that night. It ran into an NVA force and a short, but intense, firefight ensued during which one of our Montagnard scouts was KIA. For the remainder of the evening, we heard the unmistakable sounds of enemy activity in the surrounding jungle which had the tragic result of one of our soldiers being killed when he wandered outside our perimeter to relieve himself.

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The next morning as we prepared to move out, we learned that Alpha Company was in contact; it was another hour or so before we heard that the contact was serious and that Alpha needed to be reinforced. On receiving orders to relieve Alpha, we trussed our casualties so we could carry them (we wrapped the bodies in ponchos which we slung on bamboo poles), divided among the platoons the engineer equipment that had been dropped in, and started along the trail on which we had come in the day before. As most of the veterans of Dak To remember, the hills around the airstrip were rugged, steep, and heavily forested, often limiting the distance we could cover to a kilometer or two a day.

Because of the nature of this terrain, the single trail that ran along the ridgelines and fingers were the only possible ways to move. We realized the enemy knew where we were and had to take into consideration that if the NVA had deliberately engaged Alpha there was a strong likelihood that they had also prepared an ambush along the only trail leading from our laager to Alpha's location. So the combination of rugged terrain, heavier than usual loads (we had to stop frequently and replace the carry teams because the bodies were so heavy and cumbersome), and the strong possibility of imminent enemy contact slowed us down. Only by abandoning the bodies and disregarding basic infantry tactics could we have moved faster. The first we were unwilling to do and the second would have been irresponsible.

When we got to the hasty perimeter formed by the Alpha Company command group and weapons platoon, we were exhausted. Nonetheless, we attempted to push downhill to the location of Alpha's rifle platoons. Unfortunately by that time the NVA had been able to set up a strong defensive position and we could not fight our way down the hill. Having seen what I saw the next morning, I am convinced that even if we had been able to linkup with the few survivors of Alpha's rifle platoons earlier on the 22d, it would not have done much good. Most of damage was done in the first few hours of contact.

What happened to the men of Alpha Company on June 22, 1967 was a tragedy. I would like to believe that they sold their lives dearly, but the 3 or 4 days that we spent patrolling the jungles around the site of the battle looking for NVA bodies convinced me that we took more casualties than we inflicted. That the soldiers of A Company fought bravely and well is beyond dispute, but the NVA was a determined and skillful enemy and we paid a heavy price for our mistakes.

Thank you for your terrific efforts to keep us 2d Battalion Sky Soldiers in contact and for providing a forum in which we can "talk". There aren't many people besides us who understand what it was like to be a

member of one of the finest infantry battalions ever to hump the boonies. Warm regards,

Matt Harrison

A/C/2/503d

June 1967 - June 1968



George Drish "Rambo"



Charlie Company, 2/503d

It is with regret that we must tell you of the passing of George Drish. George was born September 7, 1946, and died suddenly in a car accident on June 25, 2011. Drish served with the US Army from July 25, 1966, to July 24, 1969, and was assigned to C Company 2/503 during 1967. He made the combat jump in February. He was from Chicago, Illinois. We were privileged to have him as our friend. His nickname to us was "Rambo". When our children would look at Wayne's album from Vietnam, they would always point to his picture and say "There's Dad's friend, Rambo." Those who were there will remember him singing. When he arrived in company, he was singing "Jimmy Mack", a song many of the soldiers who were already there hadn't heard. A heart and a laugh that wouldn't quit. May he rest in peace.

Iva Tuttle wife of Wayne Tuttle C/2/503d





2/503d SKY SOLDIERS

